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A

TREATISE

ON

REGENERATION.

BY

E. C. WINES, D. D.

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CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

PAGE

PRELIMINARY. Definition of regeneration—Greatness of the change effected in regeneration—Proper signification of the term—Instances of its use by profane writers—Prevalent errors concerning regeneration—Scriptural views of regeneration 7

CHAPTER II.

NATURE OF REGENERATION. Things implied in regeneration. 1. Conviction of sin—How this conviction is wrought in the soul—Modes of the Spirit's operation in regeneration various—Conviction not to be viewed as a warrant or condition of welcome in coming to Christ—Conviction, nevertheless, in its own nature, an indispensable prerequisite. 2. Illumination of the understanding—Spiritual enlightenment the first effect of the Spirit's regenerating power—All men by nature in a state of spiritual darkness—This doctrine offensive to the pride of the unrenewed heart—Scriptural proofs of the Spirit's illuminating work—Nature and scope of this illumination—Office of the Spirit to remove obstructions, not to reveal new truth. 3. Renewal of the will—The proper function of the will—Is the power of contrary choice necessary to the freedom of the will?—The difficulty theoretical rather than practical—The moral choices of the will always in harmony with the moral state of the chooser—Consequently, the will of the natural man needs a renovation—Nature of the Spirit's work in the renewal of the will—The will ever free—The renewed soul conscious of its freedom—The Spirit's agency in renewing the will a mystery. 4. A change of heart

PAGE

—The affections in the regenerate are wholly changed as to their direction and objects. 5. Sanctification of the body—The divine temper inwrought in the soul by regeneration communicates itself to the members of the body—An interesting passage from President Edwards' Diary bearing on this point—The sanctification of the body much insisted on by the sacred writers..... 11

CHAPTER III.

Instantaneousness of Regeneration. Reason affirms that regeneration must be instantaneous—Proofs of the doctrine from Scripture. First Proof: Instances of regeneration in Scripture not otherwise easily explicable. Second Proof: The fact that regeneration is termed a calling. Third Proof: The similitudes employed to set forth regeneration—(*a*) It is compared to creation—(*b*) It is compared to a resurrection. Fourth Proof: Classification of men in Scripture—Not needful to a comfortable assurance of our regeneration that we should be able to specify the time and circumstances of it—"There are diversities of operation"—Comfort administered to timid and doubting Christians..... 33

CHAPTER IV.

Necessity of Regeneration. The change effected in regeneration essential to salvation. First Proof: Drawn from the actual condition of human nature—An example illustrating natural death—Analogous example illustrating spiritual death—Confirmatory incident in the Life of Wilberforce. Second Proof: Regeneration essential to the enjoyment of heaven. Third Proof: The necessity results from the holiness of God. Fourth Proof: It results from the mission and work of Christ. Fifth Proof: It is plainly taught in Scripture—The new birth a strange doctrine to philosophers and worldlings—Solemn appeal to the reader..... 46

CHAPTER V.

The Author of Regeneration. God the Holy Ghost the sole author of regeneration—Scripture proofs of this doctrine—Divine power necessary in regeneration. 1. Because the

PAGE

change wrought therein is a change from death to life. 2. Because the work is a creation. 3. Because the thing to be changed is the dark, selfish, proud heart of man. 4. Because of the intrinsic difficulty of the work. 5. Because the Gospel, if mighty in itself, would, when dispensed under the same or similar circumstances, always be equally successful; whereas the fact is far otherwise. 6. The Bible clearly and copiously attests this necessity—Our Lord's declaration to Nicodemus. Passages which unequivocally ascribe regeneration to divine power—God claims regeneration as his work—Our Saviour's testimony—Paul's testimony—Jeremiah's testimony—Testimony of divers other Scriptures—Ezekiel's testimony in the vision of dry bones—The soul, nevertheless, not a mere lump of clay, lying inert and passive under the divine hand—Is the soul active or passive in regeneration?—Both; but in different senses—The same things often represented in Scripture as from God and from us—Regeneration and conversion distinguished—The mode of the Spirit's operation. 1. Mysterious. 2. Real. 3. Various—Practical lessons..... 58

CHAPTER VI.

The Instrument of Regeneration. The divine word the instrument of regeneration—This doctrine abundantly taught in Scripture—The history of God's grace confirms the doctrine—Two great departments of the word: the law and the gospel—Office of the law—Office of the gospel—A caution: The word only the instrumental, not the efficient cause of regeneration—Nevertheless, the truth is the divinely appointed means—God uses this agency with perfect sincerity—The sinner's duty and interest is to respond to the benevolent concern and importunity of God—Forms under which the means are to be used by the sinner—Benefit of using means—The use of means the ordinary antecedent of regeneration—The sinner must not rest in the use of means..... 83

CHAPTER VII.

Fruits and Evidences of Regeneration. Regeneration brings forth fruits, which evince its reality—Paul's description of

PAGE

regeneration as to its fruits—These fruits are: 1. New apprehensions of God and new emotions towards him. 2. new views of Christ. 3. A new relish of ordinances. 4. New views of sin. 5. New thoughts and exercises in respect to holiness. 6. New views of truth. 7. New judgments of self. 8. New feelings towards Christians. 9. New emotions towards sinners. 10. A new estimate of the world. 11. A new estimate of time. 12. New impressions and judgments of eternity. 13. A new life..... 97

CHAPTER VIII.

Conclusion. Recapitulation of the points embraced in regeneration—The essence of spiritual life inexplicable—Spiritual life a reality nevertheless—Two states, the carnal and the spiritual, to one or other of which every child of Adam belongs—The reader solemnly warned, invited, reasoned with, and urged to seek the regenerating and saving grace of God in Christ..... 109

Alphabetical Index..... 117

A TREATISE ON REGENERATION.

CHAPTER I.

PRELIMINARY.

REGENERATION is a radical and permanent change in the soul; effected instantaneously; indispensably necessary to every human being; wrought efficiently by the almighty power of God the Holy Spirit, but instrumentally by the incorruptible seed of the word of God; and producing a rich variety of spiritual fruits, which are so many tokens and evidences that the change, in any given case, has been experienced. The doctrine of the new birth is fundamental in the Christian system. It is proposed, in the following pages, to open and confirm this doctrine, as set forth in the several particulars embraced in the foregoing proposition.

A glorious spiritual change sometimes takes place in the soul of man.

This change is called in the Bible a regeneration; a new birth; a new creation; a new heart; a resurrection; the conversion of a heart of stone

into a heart of flesh; a quickening or revivifying of souls dead in trespasses and sins; a clothing of dry bones with flesh and infusion of life into the dead forms thus produced. These are strong terms. They have a mighty meaning. They indicate the completeness and thoroughness of the change expressed by them. It is a change so complete, so thorough, that men only begin to love God on passing through it, having before been wholly alienated from him. The state before the change is one of sin and spiritual death; the state after the change is one of holiness and spiritual life. The former is the agitation of the troubled ocean, casting up mire and dirt; the latter is calmness, peace, and joy.

The Greek word, rendered by our translators *regeneration*, denotes an alteration of state, by which a person is brought into a wholly new and reformed condition. The change indicated by the term is, in every case, a change for the better. Cicero calls his restoration from exile a regeneration. Josephus gives the same name to the restoration of the Jewish land after the captivity. In Roman law, the manumission of a slave was termed his regeneration. When the Israelites spoke of the renunciation of a false religion and the adoption of the true in its place, they called the change thus effected a new birth. A Gentile, converted from paganism to Judaism, was regarded by the Jews as one new born, a child just beginning to live. In general, the word denotes an introduction into a

new, improved, and more happy state. Theologically, it signifies a complete renovation of heart and life, a moral revolution in the man, in his judgments, emotions, principles, aims, and conduct; insomuch that his opposite states—the old and the new—are characterized by words, which express no other states in the human soul.

Very erroneous notions are often entertained on this subject. By some, the new birth is supposed to consist in a mere persuasion of the truth, the belief of an orthodox creed. Others place it in baptism, ascribing a mysterious efficacy to a mere outward ceremony; a ceremony, it is true, of Divine institution, and having a high significance and value; but, at the same time, deriving its importance from the fact that it is a sign, seal, and instrument of grace, not grace itself, nor the necessary or invariable channel of its communication. Others, again, regard it as consisting in an outward reformation of the life, the mere practice of the duties of relative morality, from whatever motive these duties may spring, by whatever rule they may be controlled, and to whatever end they may be directed. Other theories, still, represent as regeneration a visible profession of religion, or some improvement resulting from the use of reason, or such a mere intellectual perception of moral truth, as renders virtue in some degree attractive, and vice proportionably repulsive, to the natural understanding. These are grave errors. Their only tendency

is to benumb the spiritual faculties, to cloud the spiritual perceptions, and to lull the soul into a deadly spiritual slumber.

Regeneration, according to the scriptural representation of it, is a very different thing from all this. Neither orthodoxy, nor baptism, nor morality, nor outward reformation, nor the improvement of reason, nor a visible profession, nor any degree of light to which the natural understanding may attain, answers to the conception of the new birth, as it lay in the minds of prophets and apostles. The change indicated by this term is real, not nominal; radical, not superficial; internal and spiritual, rather than outward and carnal; in a word, it is a change of the subject, and not of the name only. To be born again signifies nothing less than the infusion of a new principle of spiritual life into the soul, whereby it becomes both inclined and enabled to perform spiritual actions, acceptable unto God. It signifies a re-impression of the Divine image upon the soul; the soul itself remaining the same in its essence, but becoming radically changed in its qualities, desires, and objects.

CHAPTER II.

NATURE OF REGENERATION.

REGENERATION implies conviction of sin, a Divine illumination of the understanding, a renovation of the will, a rectification of the affections, and a sanctification of the body itself.

In the new birth the soul is convinced of sin.

To that change in the moral state of the soul, that renovation of its faculties in which the new birth consists, such conviction of sin is indispensably necessary. This conviction the Holy Spirit works in the mind, when he so clears the soul's vision as to enable it to see the guilt of sin, and when he gives to the sinner a realizing apprehension of the wrath of God as the just desert of sin. The special means used by the Spirit to convince of sin and misery, is the Divine law; for by the law is the knowledge of sin. By a view of the holy commandments of the law, the sinner is convinced of the evil nature of sin; he sees it to be "exceeding sinful." By a view of the fearful threatenings of the law, he is convinced of the guilt of sin;

he sees that it "deserves God's wrath and curse, both in this life and that which is to come."

But this conviction is not uniform in all, nor produced in a uniform manner. In some, it is a sudden, intense, and overwhelming sense of sin, darted into the soul, as it were, from the point of a fiery arrow. In others, it is the gradual result of reading, meditation, and prayer; and is more subdued and calm in its tone. Sometimes, the Spirit gives the sinner a view of the fountain of sin in his heart; at other times, he shows him some particular sin in all its varied and horrible aggravations, or he draws up a whole catalogue of these, and sets them in dread array before him. In one case, this law-work is very short; the sinner scarcely knows what legal terrors are; for, simultaneously with the view of his ruin, is the view of the recovery; he no sooner sees his sins than he sees the all-sufficient righteousness of Christ, and sweetly embraces it as the refuge of his soul; he is healed almost as soon as he is wounded; he feels the smart and instantly looks to Christ for relief. In another case, a terrible light is let into the sinner's mind; he sees his heart to be a sink of corruptions, full of loathsome lusts and horrid enmity against God, a very chamber of imagery, filled with all manner of abominable idols; he is pierced through and through with a sense of his awful guilt; he cries out in the bitterness of his anguish, "What shall I do?" and he lies for days, or weeks, or even months and

years, under the most distressing apprehension of the Divine wrath, before he is cheered with a view of the Divine mercy in the pardon of his sins. But whatever be the gentleness or the power of the Spirit's operation, and whatever the method he takes in dealing with the soul in reference to its eternal interests, in all cases where a saving work is wrought, conviction of sin must be of such strength as to humble the sinner, to make him feel his need of Christ and his salvation, to cause him to fall down at the foot of the cross in lowly confession of his guilt, and to bring him to the resolution to forsake his sins and cast himself on the sovereign mercy of God for pardon and eternal life.

But, while we maintain that regeneration presupposes a sense of sin and of our liability to the just displeasure of God, we must guard against the error of supposing that conviction of sin, dread of punishment, anxiety for deliverance, outward reformation, attendance on the external means of grace, sorrow for sin springing from a fear of its consequences, or any similar exercises and works constitute a condition of welcome in coming to Christ, or a qualification warranting us to come. It would follow from such a view, that the invitations of the gospel are addressed only to awakened and anxious sinners. Few things could tend more directly or strongly to foster the natural pride of the human heart than such a doctrine, since it must necessarily teach men to look upon themselves as the favourites

of heaven, while yet they are in a state of unbelief and rebellion against God. This was the error of the Remonstrants of Holland, against which the Synod of Dort lifted up its voice; a grave and dangerous error, well calculated to drown in perdition the souls of those who receive it.

But, on the other hand, it is no less an error that any sinner will apply to Christ without seeing and feeling his need of him. It is one thing to hold that conviction of sin is necessary as a warrant to apply to the Saviour, and quite another to plead for it as necessary, in the very nature of things, to a compliance with the warrant, which the sinner has independently of such conviction. The consciousness of disease is not necessary in order that one may have the *right* to apply to a physician; yet no man *will* apply for a cure without a conviction that he is sick. Just so with the sinner. He may come and welcome to Christ at any time; but sinners never will come, till conviction of sin, a sense of their spiritual malady, drives them to him. So the Bible represents the matter. It assigns, as the reason why Christ is rejected by the bulk of mankind, the fact that they are whole in their own eyes, and therefore think they need no physician. Hence it follows that to be convinced of sin is a necessary prerequisite to our applying to Christ; such conviction, however, not being of the nature of a warrant entitling us to come to him, but rather a powerful motive constraining us to come.

In the new birth the understanding is savingly enlightened in the truth.

This illumination of the mind is properly the first effect of the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit. In the creation of the material world, the first command of the Almighty was, "Let there be light." The production of this radiant element was the primal effect of creative power. In this respect the analogy between the old creation and the new is perfect. The comparison is expressly made by the apostle in 2 Cor. iv. 6: "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

In setting forth the moral state of fallen man, the Scriptures mainly insist on four particulars: the depravity of the mind, the depravity of the will, the depravity of the conscience, and the depravity of the affections; whence result spiritual blindness, stubbornness, insensibility, and sensuality. With the first of these only are we concerned in the present chapter. All men, since the fall, are, by nature, in a condition of spiritual darkness. However wise, learned, or skilful they may be in worldly affairs, in spiritual things they are dark, blind, ignorant, and foolish, till they are "renewed in the spirit of their mind." This spiritual darkness is either objective or subjective; that is to say, it is either *on* the mind, arising from a want of the means of knowledge, which is the case with those

who are deprived of Divine revelation; or it is *in* the mind, arising from a want of ability to discern spiritual things, though outwardly revealed, which is the case with all men in the state of unregeneracy. In this respect, spiritual darkness is perfectly analogous to natural darkness; this latter being, in like manner, outward or inward: outward when it arises from the absence of a luminous body; inward, when it results from such a defect in the organ of vision as destroys the power of seeing.

This doctrine of a universal spiritual darkness, in unrenewed men, is very humbling, and therefore very distasteful to the natural pride of the human heart. Hence, when our Saviour, in one of his discourses, charged this blindness upon mankind, the Pharisees, with scorn and indignation, repelled the accusation with the question, "Are we blind also?" Nevertheless, it is, unequivocally, a doctrine of the Bible.

That it is one of the great functions of the Holy Spirit, in regeneration, to impart light, is clear, in the first place, from the names he bears. He is called the Spirit of knowledge, the Spirit of wisdom, the Spirit of truth, and the Spirit of revelation in the knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Nor is the same thing less clear, in the second place, from many plain Scripture testimonies. The Bible account of our condition, prior to regeneration, is, that our understanding is darkened, and that we are alienated from the life of God, through

the ignorance that is in us, because of the blindness of our hearts. Nay, in our unregenerate state, we are even said to be darkness itself. Solomon assures us that evil men understand not judgment; Daniel, that none of the wicked understand; and the evangelical historian, that the light shineth in darkness. Most illustrious and convincing is the testimony of the Apostle in 1 Cor. ii. 4: "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." Other like passages might be cited; but let these suffice, as the Scriptural representation of the darkness of unregeneracy.

From all this it would logically follow that, if we are ever made wise unto salvation, there must be a work of spiritual illumination wrought in our understanding; and that, until this is accomplished, the gospel, though in itself the wisdom of God, will yet be accounted foolishness by us. And to this effect also, the testimony of Scripture is full and clear. The very purpose for which Paul was commissioned and sent forth to preach the gospel, was, he informs us, "To open men's eyes, and to turn them from darkness unto light." Accordingly, in writing to the Ephesians, he thus describes the process of their conversion: "Ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord." To the same effect he says to the Colossians, "Who (meaning, as the context shows, God the Father)

hath delivered us from the power of darkness." Again, addressing the Thessalonian converts, he says: "Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day; we are not of the night, nor of the darkness." In like manner and to the like effect, Peter declares concerning the people of God, that they "have been called out of darkness into his marvellous light." John also told the Christians of his day that he wrote unto them, because the darkness was past, and the true light now shone, adding, "Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things." Remarkable is the testimony of the Psalmist: "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him; and he will show them his covenant."

Thus clearly does it appear, from Scripture, that, in the words of the great Owen, "Spiritual darkness is upon all men, till God, by an almighty but effectual work of the Spirit, shine into them, or create light in them. And this darkness is that 'light within,' which some boast of in themselves and others."

It is proper briefly to declare the nature and scope of this illumination. Its province is broad and comprehensive. It extends to the whole system of revealed truth, but has special reference to those truths which are fundamental, and of saving efficacy. Under the illuminating power of the Spirit in regeneration, the scheme of redemption and the doctrines which circle round it, are revealed

to the sinner's apprehension with a light, and power, and attractive beauty, of which he was before wholly unconscious. He is enlightened in the knowledge of himself; so that he sees his guilty, wretched, and perishing condition, and so is prepared and inclined to accept the proffered boon of divine forgiveness and mercy. He is enlightened in the knowledge of God; so that he no longer looks upon him as a tyrant demanding an impossible obedience, but sees in him a tender, gracious, and loving Father, and so is prepared and inclined to return to him with love and delight, instead of fleeing from him with hatred and terror. He is enlightened in the knowledge of Christ; of his person, offices, and work as Mediator, of his righteousness, as the surety of the new covenant, and of the fulness, freeness, and suitableness of his atonement, so that he sees his ability and willingness to save to the uttermost, and so is prepared and inclined to trust in him for pardon, justification, sanctifying grace, and eternal glory. This divine and saving illumination works a change in all his views. The evil of sin, the excellence of holiness, the vanity of earth, the glory of heaven, the preciousness of time, the vastness of eternity, the folly of self-indulgence, the wisdom of self-denial, the worth of the soul, the sweetness of ordinances; in a word, all the solemn and stupendous realities of the invisible and eternal world, are seen and appreciated, in the new and divine light which streams in upon the soul.

Nevertheless, all the truth necessary to salvation, it is pertinent and perhaps not unimportant to observe here, is revealed in the written word. The appropriate work of the Spirit, in regeneration, is the removal of obstructions, which cloud the spiritual perceptions of the unrenewed man. His office resembles that of a surgeon, who removes a cataract from the natural eyes. The man upon whom this operation has been performed, had previously lived in an atmosphere of light, and had been surrounded by a profusion of exquisite beauties. But the organ of vision was diseased, obstructed, and incapable of exerting its function; and hence all those beauties were to him as though they had not been. So it is with the soul in its unrenewed state. The Bible contains a revelation of all the doctrines to be believed, all the precepts to be obeyed, all the perils to be avoided, all the interests to be secured, all the graces to be cultivated, and all the promises which minister courage and strength in the Christian race. But there is no power of spiritual vision in a dead soul. The carnal mind is blinded by prejudice, captivated by sense, misled by the maxims of worldly policy, and cheated by the illusions of the devil. The letter of the word may have been profoundly studied, and distinct notions of truth attained by the natural understanding; but these notions lie cold and dead in the regions of the intellect. They have not penetrated to the heart, with which, the apostle

tells us, "man believeth unto righteousness." The intellect has mastered the doctrines of the Bible as mere objects of thought; but the soul discerns not their real excellence, feels not their constraining energy, melts not under their moving appeals, and lives not by their vivifying power. In order to this, the Holy Ghost must take away the thick films of spiritual blindness, and open the eyes of the understanding to a true spiritual discernment.

The discovery of unknown truth is not the object of the Spirit's illumination. So to represent the matter would insult the Author of revelation. "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul;" that is, it is sufficient as an external means of conversion. There is no defect to be supplied by any further Divine communications. The *perpetuity* of inspiration is the proud dogma of a profane philosophy, or the corrupt gloss of a rationalizing theology, but one remove from it. The doctrine of new revealings by the Spirit belongs to the superstitions of a dark age. Let enthusiasts boast of dreams, and visions, and raptures, and revelations; every sober-minded Christian can trace all his spiritual perceptions, and holy tempers, and devout feelings to the records of prophets and apostles, or to the words of men drawn from those inspired teachings, and in harmony with them.

In regeneration, the will is renewed in righteousness and true holiness.

The understanding is that faculty of the soul which thinks, compares, reasons, and judges. The function of the will is to choose or refuse. It is the will which embraces or rejects an action, or course of actions, submitted to its choice. The understanding weighs objects; the will determines upon them.

The human will, considered as an object of philosophical inquiry, is shrouded in deep mystery; but, if it be considered as an object of practical inquiry, few subjects are less involved in difficulty. The great question is in regard to the freedom of the will. The point in debate here relates, not to the fact of the will's freedom, for that all admit; but to the nature and extent of its freedom. The hinge of the controversy lies in the question, whether it be essential to true freedom that the will, together with its actual choice in a given case, should be endowed with a power of contrary choice. It is here that issue is joined. The exact point is this: The will, under given circumstances, chooses a particular object. Has it the power, at that very time and under those very circumstances, to make a directly opposite choice? And is such power of contrary choice, under conditions every way identical, essential to its freedom?

On this question parties divide, and range them-

selves under different banners. There are difficulties on both sides of the question. If you affirm that the power of contrary choice is essential to the freedom of the will, the opponent of your theory instantly retorts, and, as it seems to me, with unanswerable force: "Where is the certainty, then, that in the cycles of eternity, Gabriel and Paul may not use their ability and lapse from righteousness?" If you deny the power of contrary choice as an attribute of the will's freedom, it is urged, with equal vehemence, although, as I think, with less of logical power, that, under your system, man is but a machine, impelled by an irresistible necessity in the direction which he actually takes, and that your doctrine is identical with the fatalism of the ancient Stoics and the modern Turks. Each of these objections, which are mutually urged by the opposite parties in this controversy, becomes, in the hands of an astute and skilful dialectician, a weapon of prodigious force, whose heavy and well aimed blows it is very hard to parry.

Yet, intricate and perplexed as are the speculative aspects of this deep theme, there is no practical difficulty whatsoever attending it. Every unregenerate person *knows* that he is perfectly free in his wickedness. He knows that he is under no irresistible impulsion to sin. He knows that he might, if he would, act differently from what he does. Of all this he has the high evidence of consciousness. On the other hand, every regenerate person knows,

by the same unimpeachable testimony of consciousness, that, in yielding himself to God, there was no force, no compulsion, no unavoidable and imperious necessity, acting upon him from without. He is conscious of entire liberty of choice. And yet it is not more certain that an insect cannot make a world, than it is that an unrenewed man, so remaining, will not choose God, and holiness, and heaven, as his portion.

The whole explanation of this phenomenon,—and it is an ample explanation,—lies in the plain and certain fact, that the choices of the will, when they relate to moral objects, are always determined by the moral state of the person choosing. The refined cannot choose the company of the vulgar. The learned cannot choose the society of the ignorant. The impure cannot choose the society of the pure, nor the pure that of the impure. The man of confirmed veracity cannot utter a lie. The perfectly honest man cannot commit a fraud. The man of true honour cannot take a bribe. All these are felt to be impossibilities. But why? Because each would contradict a permanent moral state of the chooser; would be, in effect, a denial of his moral nature. It is a law of the will, then, as fixed as the laws of gravitation, that its moral choices will ever correspond with the moral state of the chooser. Hence an unregenerate man, remaining unregenerate, will never choose holiness. True, he has the natural power to do so, if by this be meant

no more than that it is the natural and proper function of the will to choose between several objects proposed to its election. But he lacks the moral power; that is, his moral state is such that, until a radical change is effected, to choose holiness would be an absolute self-contradiction, a denial of his own nature, and therefore a flat impossibility; the bias and impulsion of his soul being ever and only to evil, till it is changed by the grace of God. And this is just what the great Teacher affirms, when he says that "Satan cannot cast out Satan." There is an obstinate and overmastering inward determination of the fallen will to evil. The idea of depravity conquering and expelling itself is incongruous and absurd. As well might we look to see death produce life, or enmity turn itself into love, or pollution produce purity.

From all this it results that the will of man needs a renovation, such a change as will secure a reversal of its choices. To renew the will is to incline it to spiritual good as its chief aim and highest joy; to render it conformable to the will of God; to implant in it a new and fixed propensity to what is holy and amiable, and a new and fixed opposition to what is sinful and hateful, in the sight of God: to all which it is, both by nature and practice, totally averse. Now, the renewal of the will naturally accompanies the spiritual and supernatural illumination of the mind, as already explained; for, although slight and transient convictions of duty

may issue in nothing but slight and transient resolves of amendment, yet a thorough enlightenment of the understanding in the knowledge of truth and duty, accompanied by deep and earnest convictions of duty, both inwrought in the soul by the Divine Spirit,—may and must reach and pervade the will, directing and commanding its choices.

But the Spirit's agency in the new creation is always in harmony with the nature of the subject, that is to say, it never violates the law of free agency. Hence he is said "to work in us both to *will* and to do." No violence is done to the will. No constraint is laid upon it. No compulsion is used towards it. Compulsion of the will is a self-contradiction. To force the will is to annihilate it, to destroy its very nature as will. Choice necessarily implies freedom. When the Lord sends the rod of his strength out of Zion, a willing people is made in the day of his power. There is an inward, secret, gracious exertion of almighty power put forth upon the will in regeneration, by which it is renewed, vivified, and enabled to act freely in its choice of God, and holiness and heaven. This is accomplished by the implantation in the soul of a principle of spiritual life and activity, whereby the will is determined to its new and heavenly actings with absolute certainty, yet without the least infringement upon its liberty. There is no change in the substance of the will, that being the same after as before regeneration; but only in its qualities and operations. God

changes the corrupt nature of the will, without invading or altering its essential nature.

The will, therefore, remains ever free, and that from the very necessity of the case, from its essential properties as will; free in its original innocency, free in its wicked apostasy, free in its gracious renovation. Yet in each of these states, there was, or is, a controlling bias of the soul towards objects congenial to its moral condition. In the state of innocency, there was a natural bias to spiritual objects; in the fallen and unregenerate state, there is a depraved bias to carnal and sensual objects; while, in the renewed state, there is an implanted gracious bias, though with many oppositions of nature, to whatever is apprehended to be consonant to the Divine mind.

Of most of what is advanced above, every regenerated person has the evidence in his own consciousness. We never hear, from such an one, any complaint of violence done to his will, or of his being compelled to the choice of holiness. He is, indeed, deeply sensible of the power of God upon his soul; he feels, acknowledges, and adores the hand of the Lord in his regeneration; but he is so far from thinking or complaining of any compulsion or hardship in the case, that he looks upon the change as an unspeakable mercy, and rejoices in it exceedingly. While he knows that his soul is now athirst for God, and willingly chooses and delights in his ways, he is no less sensible that this marvellous

transformation, by which a willing slave to Satan has become the willing servant of the Lord, was effected by the sovereign, gracious, and almighty power of him who works in his ransomed ones "to will and to do of his own good pleasure."

How the Spirit works this change in the will we know not. His agency is expressly compared to the wind, a powerful but invisible agent. We know only that no compulsive influence is used. The sinner acts all the time with entire freedom, of which, indeed, he has the evidence of his own consciousness. All we can say is, that he is "made willing in the day of God's power." An absolutely irresistible Divine power and an absolutely perfect human freedom concur in this change; whether or not our narrow, weak, purblind intellect can explain, or even comprehend, the mystery.

In the new birth, the heart is changed; the affections are purged, rectified, and fixed upon their proper objects.

In general: Whereas, before regeneration, sin was rolled as a sweet morsel under the tongue; now God, Christ, holiness, and heaven are the mainspring of the soul's activities, the chief sources of its joy, the ultimate term to which all its aspirations and efforts are reduced. Enmity to God, corrupt affection, carnal prejudice, depraved inclination no longer reign; but the soul, with delight and complacency, cleaves unto God and his ways.

In particular: Before regeneration, the heart loved the world and the things of the world, and hated God, his people, and his laws; now it loves the objects of its former enmity, and hates the objects of its former choice and affection. Before regeneration, the heart desired the pleasures, profits, and honours of earth, and was averse to spiritual employments and joys; now it longs after communion with God, conformity to Christ, the indwelling of the Spirit, and a share in the heavenly inheritance, and feels an aversion to the muddy streams of earthly gratification. Before regeneration, the heart took delight in carnal and sensual pleasures, and was filled with sorrow at their loss; now it delights in God, his word, his will, and his ordinances, and grieves over the hidings of his face and the remains of indwelling sin. Before regeneration, the heart hoped for what it loved, desired, and delighted in; that is, earthly possessions and carnal gratifications in their various forms, and feared physical suffering, the loss of worldly wealth and honour, and the frowns and scoffs of men; now it hopes for final and complete deliverance from sin and the possession and enjoyment of eternal life in the beatific vision of God, and fears the displeasure of God and that divine wrath which is revealed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. Thus do love and hatred, desire and aversion, joy and sorrow, hope and fear, and whatever other affections have a dwelling in the human heart, change

their direction and their objects in the regenerate. All the fruits of the Spirit are produced in them; all his graces are imparted to them; and the heart, before a wilderness overgrown with briers and thorns, is transformed into the garden of the Lord, filled with plants of righteousness; too often, alas! feeble and sickly in their growth, but still yielding some blossoms and fruits of holiness, and destined hereafter, when transplanted to a more friendly clime, to flourish in immortal bloom and fruitfulness.

In the new birth, the body itself is sanctified and consecrated to God.

When the soul has been convinced of its darkness, pollution, guilt, and misery; when a gracious light has shone upon the mind, revealing to it divine truths in their native excellency, beauty, and attractiveness; when the will, under the influence of this supernatural illumination, has embraced these truths as more precious than gold, or pearls, or rubies; and when the affections, purged and sublimated, are drawn towards spiritual and heavenly objects, and cleave to them with complacency and delight; the new and divine temper thus inwrought in the soul, communicates itself even to the members of the body; and hence the apostle tells us that these, which were before "instruments of unrighteousness to sin," are now yielded as "instruments of righteousness unto God."

President Edwards has the following beautiful passage in his diary, bearing upon this point: "I have this day," says he, "been before God, and have given myself, all that I am and have, to God; so that I am in no respect my own. I can challenge no right in myself, in this understanding, this will, these affections. Neither have I a right to this body, or any of its members; no right to this tongue, these hands, these feet, these eyes, these ears. I have given myself clean away."

The consecration of the body to God and the sanctification of its members, is a point much insisted on by the sacred writers. "Know ye not," says Paul, addressing himself to Christians, "that ye are the temple of God? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy." Again, the same inspired penman tells us, that he "kept under his body and brought it into subjection." The eye of a Christian ought never to read any impure book, nor voluntarily look upon any sinful exhibitions, much less take delight in them. The ear of a Christian should never voluntarily hear any profane or impure discourse, nor listen to the strains of voluptuous music. The hands of a Christian ought never to do any work which may not be to the glory of God and the good of man. The feet of a Christian ought never to bear him to any place where the name of his Saviour is likely to be blasphemed, or his own Christian profession dishonoured; his prayer, like that of Moses, must ever be,

"If thy presence go not with me, carry me not up hence." The tongue of a Christian should never indulge in the utterance of falsehood, slander, profaneness, or impurity. But eye, ear, hand, foot, tongue, and all other members, in all their functions, should be used in a manner and to purposes becoming a servant of Jesus, redeemed by his grace, justified by his righteousness, washed in his blood, united to his person, and sealed by his Spirit to the day of final and eternal redemption.

CHAPTER III.

INSTANTANEOUSNESS OF REGENERATION.

THE exact moment when the new birth takes place may not be known; possibly, in most cases, is not known; and the previous law-work, the antecedent state of conviction, concern, and anxiety, may have been of longer or shorter duration. Nevertheless, there is and must be, a moment when the heart is changed, and when the man, who was before characteristically an unbeliever and a sinner, becomes characteristically a believer and a Christian. We cannot even form a conception of an intermediate state between regeneracy and unregeneracy. In a natural sense, a man must be either dead or alive; and this is equally true in a spiritual sense. To predicate spiritual death and regeneration, or spiritual life and unregeneracy, of the same person at the same time, would be a self-contradiction. Hence the transition from death to life must, in the nature of things, be instantaneous. There is not, nor can there be, a single moment, when the soul is neither regenerate nor unregenerate. Every man must be in the state of nature or the state of grace,

the child of God or the child of Satan—an heir of heaven or an heir of hell.

This is the voice of reason, and the teaching of Scripture is in harmony with it.

That regeneration is not a gradual but an instantaneous work, appears from various instances of it, found on the pages of Holy Scripture, which cannot be readily explained on any other theory.

Let any one examine those passages in the Gospels (Matt. ix. 9; Mark i. 16—20; and John i. 43), where we have an account of the call of Matthew, Peter, Andrew, James, John, and Philip; and he will readily satisfy himself on this point. When the Saviour met with these men, and invited them to his service, they were engaged in other pursuits, and had no thought of changing their manner of life. But when they heard his voice, and felt the constraining power of his grace, they instantly left all and followed him. Along with that call, there went a divine energy, which caused them immediately to act in a manner altogether new, and to adopt principles and habits, quite alien to all they had felt or practised before. So, also, according to a record contained in John i. 49, no sooner was the Messiah revealed to Nathaniel, than he at once received him as his Lord and Saviour, crying out with love, gratitude, and trust, "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God, thou art the king of Israel." Here, again, was an instantaneous work of regenerating grace.

In like manner, nothing can be plainer or more certain, than that the change in the three thousand on the day of Pentecost was wrought instantaneously. They heard the word, received it gladly, felt the converting power of the Spirit, and were immediately baptized as regenerated persons. The thief on the cross, Zaccheus the publican, the jailer at Philippi, Lydia of Thyatira, and Dionysius and Damaris of Athens, are other instances of the same kind. But the most illustrious example and proof of the instantaneous nature of regeneration is the case of Saul of Tarsus. He himself tells us that, when it pleased God to reveal his Son to him, immediately he conferred not with flesh and blood. Gal. i. 16. And the author of the Acts of the Apostles (ix. 4–6) informs us, that when Jesus appeared to him, on the way to Damascus, and declared who he was, on the instant the fierce and bloody persecutor was converted into the meek and obedient disciple; for when the Lord said, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest," he, without a moment's delay, responded, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Who can fail to perceive that, in all the instances enumerated above—and others might probably be gleaned from the sacred record and added to the list—the change from death unto life was as sudden as it was glorious?

That regeneration is not effected by slow degrees, but in a moment of time, is evident from the fact that this work is termed in Scripture a calling, *and the subjects of it are said to be* called.

"To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints," Rom. i. 7. "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. * * * Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called," &c., Rom. viii. 28, 30. "Faithful is he that calleth you," 1 Thess. v. 24. "That they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance." Heb. ix. 15. "Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling," Heb. iii. 1. "Who hath called us with an holy calling," 2 Tim. i. 9. "For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called," 1 Cor. i. 26. There cannot be a reasonable doubt, that in these and many parallel passages is meant that effectual calling, by which a sinner savingly believes and obeys the gospel; that is, in which he is born again, and renewed in the temper of his mind. Indeed, as Dr. Hodge has remarked, in commenting on Rom. i. 1, in the Epistles of the New Testament this word is rarely, if ever, used in reference to one externally called or invited to any office or blessing, but uniformly expresses the idea of an effectual calling. But what inference is warranted by the fact, that when Christ calls sin-

ners, he regenerates them, and that his saving work of conversion is indicated by the term *calling?* Plainly this, that the work is done at once, and not gradually. He speaks, and it is done. He does but call, and the sinner responds by an immediate return. What more striking proof can we have that regeneration is an instantaneous work?

The similitudes employed in Scripture to set forth and illustrate regeneration evince the instantaneous nature of the work.

The work of God's renewing grace is therein compared to the work of creation and the work of raising the dead.

It is compared to the work of creation. But when God created the material and visible universe, he spake, and it was done. He said: Let there be light, and there was light. He said: Let the earth bring forth grass, let there be lights in the firmament of heaven, let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature; and it was so. The omnific word was instantly followed by the effect. So in the new creation, God speaks and it is done. The analogy is expressly affirmed by the Apostle. God, he says, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, shines in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. As in the natural so in the new spiritual creation, the effect of the creative fiat is as sudden as it is stupendous.

Again, the work of God's renewing grace is compared to a resurrection. But raising the dead is an instantaneous work. When Jesus called "Lazarus, come forth," he that was dead came forth instantly. Not a moment intervened between the command and the execution. The sleeping dust at once felt the vitalizing energy of his word, and was alive. The Scriptures pronounce unregenerate persons to be dead. Regeneration restores them to life. Now in nature there is no intermediate state, there can be none, between life and death. When a person is dead, he has not the least degree of life; and, conversely, when a person has the least degree of life, he is alive. Hence, if the comparison in which the new birth is likened to a resurrection be aptly chosen, regeneration must be an instantaneous work. As, along with the call to Lazarus there went an almighty power, imparting natural life at once, so the call of Christ to sinners is accompanied by a divine power, which, at the very instant when it is issued, infuses spiritual life into the dead soul.

That regeneration is an instantaneous work is still further evident from a classification of men common in the Scriptures.

The Bible divides all mankind into two classes, viz. the righteous and the wicked, saints and sinners, believers and unbelievers, the sheep and the goats, the friends and the enemies of God. There is no middle ground between these two classes;

every human being belongs to the one or the other of them. Further, the Scripture represents the persons who belong to these classes respectively as travelling two different and, indeed, opposite ways; the broad way, whose end is destruction, and the narrow way, whose end is everlasting life. Every child of Adam is treading in the one or the other of these ways. "To heaven or hell we daily bend our course." Witsius has well shown the absurdity of supposing an intermediate state between spiritual life and death, by inquiring where a person, dying in that state, would go. Would he be received into heaven? But heaven is open only to the actually regenerate, according to the clear sentence of our Saviour in his conversation with Nicodemus. Would he be thrust down to hell? But hell is the portion of unbelievers, who have all their life walked in the broad way.

That regeneration is an instantaneous and not a progressive work is very clear. But there is a practical question which arises just at this stage of the discussion, of no little interest, viz. *Whether it is essential to a comfortable assurance of our being born again, that we be able to specify the time and circumstances of our regeneration.*

It is important that a Scriptural answer be given to this question, to the end that, on the one hand, the self-deceiver may not be soothed and flattered

to presume on his conversion, and, on the other, that the sincere but trembling believer may not be tormented with needless alarms, nor be tempted to write bitter things against himself, to the dishonour of God's grace and the anguish of his own soul. Many a dear child of God has been troubled with distressing doubts and fears concerning his spiritual condition, because he could not tell the time and place when and where the work of regenerating grace was wrought in his heart. Since writing the very last sentence, I have seen a letter from a Christian mother, the wife of a Professor in one of our Theological Seminaries, giving an account of the death of her son, in which she says: "He lamented that he had done nothing for Christ, and at times felt as though he could not be saved. His father had many and interesting conversations with him on the nature of faith, to all which he assented, but sometimes feared that he was not included in the purposes of mercy, because he could not remember those deep seasons of distress recorded by some Christians. He never had those ecstasies, and bright visions, and rapturous joys of which we sometimes read, but his mind settled into a clear and calm acquiescence in the will of God, and steady trust in his Saviour."

Innumerable are the instances in which the people of God, like this young man, have their fears excited and their peace broken by similar apprehensions, arising from similar causes. They hear

others, in relating their religious experience, tell of pungent convictions, of terror and anguish, caused by the view of their awful guilt, of fearful agitations and conflicts on giving up their sins, of the sweet hope of immortal glory springing up suddenly in the soul, as the sun at evening breaks out after a storm, of rapturous views of the Saviour, and irresistible longings after communion with God; in short, they hear them giving them most minute details of the time, place, and circumstances of their conversion. At such recitals the Christian is often depressed, disheartened, and inclined to take up a bitter lamentation against himself. "See, O my soul," he is ready to say, "how it is with others. They know the time and the method of the Spirit's operation in their souls. They are able to tell when and how God met them by his grace, and sent them help out of the sanctuary. Their convictions, their struggles, their repentance, their first act of trust in the Saviour, the first dawn of hope, the first inflowing of love, peace, and joy into their souls, are all distinctly traced on the memory. How different is my case from theirs! I have no such experience as this. If I were truly converted, if I had received the grace of God in truth and not in name only, would it be thus? Have I not reason to conclude that I am deceived as to my spiritual state; that my religion is but the effect of education or imitation; and that I have only the form of godliness, while I am a stranger to its living power?"

To all this I would respond, in general, that we cannot be too jealous of ourselves. We have inspired authority for the statement, that "the heart is deceitful above all things;" and the testimony of every day's experience and observation comfirms its truth. Many, in their own and others' estimation, have stood fair for heaven, who have at last awaked in hell. Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. Nevertheless, in our self-scrutiny, we must be just, as well as cautious; we must be as impartial, as we are rigid. The main danger, it is true, is of undue lenity towards ourselves; yet the opposite error is possible. We may wrong ourselves, we may wrong our Saviour, by too stern a judgment. It is possible that, in disparaging ourselves, we may disparage the grace of God. We may grieve the Holy Spirit by denying his work in our souls. If the genuine fruits of the Spirit appear to ourselves in our heart, and to others in our life, we need not be distressed, because we cannot remember the time or the circumstances of our conversion.

"There are diversities of operation, but the same Spirit." While regeneration, in the substance of it, is the same in all, there is no assignable or conceivable limit to the modes of the Spirit's operation in effecting this gracious change. Some are brought under agonizing terrors; Sinai thunders long and loud; the law flashes a terrific light into the conscience; and their whole soul is filled with agitation

and alarm. Such persons can as readily lose the sense of their being, as forget the day and the manner of their conversion. The change was sudden, visible, striking. This will generally be the case with the drunkard, the blasphemer, the swearer, and the openly vicious of every name. In other cases, the Spirit often proceeds in a totally different manner in his regenerating and saving work. Grace is gently and imperceptibly infused into the soul. No sudden or extraordinary impressions are made. The first movings of the Spirit upon the heart are unknown. Mount Sinai is serene as Olivet. The law utters no thunders; the conscience feels no alarms. The Spirit distils his influences into the heart as silently and insensibly as the dew falls upon the tender grass. A saving work is wrought; but the happy subject of it is himself all unconscious of the mighty transformation, till its clustering fruits begin to show themselves in his heart and life. The conversion of Paul was sudden, remarkable, and illustrious, and therefore, at the time of its occurrence, evident to himself and others. While to Samuel, on the contrary, the kingdom of God came not with observation; it is probable that he knew not when converting grace was bestowed upon him, whether in unconscious infancy, or after reason had shed its dawning light upon his soul. And yet the calm and gentle prophet was as eminent for his piety in his day, as the impetuous and fiery apostle was in his. The great question, there-

fore, is, not what terrors or raptures we have felt, nor whether we can tell the hour when a saving work was actually begun in us, and by what steps we were brought to the Redeemer; but whether the true workings of grace are felt in our hearts, and the true marks of grace discovered in our conduct, and whether we can comfort ourselves and edify others with the genuine fruits of regeneration and the constant tenor of a godly life.

Reader, are you ready to judge that you have not experienced a saving work of grace, because you have not felt those sharp convictions, those legal terrors, those fearful agitations, and those rapturous emotions of joy, which others have known? By what a false standard do you judge yourself? The apostle sharply rebukes those Christians, who measure themselves by themselves, and compare themselves among themselves.

The question is not whether you have had the same experience of terror, joy, and love, as others; but whether you have been convinced of your sinful and lost estate by nature, whether you have seen the suitableness and sufficiency of Christ, and whether you receive and rest upon him alone for salvation. If, though with but a trembling trust, you can answer affirmatively these questions, it matters little whether or not you can call to mind the happy moment when God sent his converting grace into your heart. To deny your experience of his grace on any such ground, would be to limit

the Holy One of Israel, to dictate to infinite wisdom, to sow the seeds of continual uneasiness, and to unfit yourself for a cheerful discharge of your duty. If you have had such a view of your sin as to lead you humbly and willingly to accept the Saviour, and thankfully to devote yourself to him, you may boldly take the comfort of a Christian hope, since, in that case, you have truly closed with the Redeemer, and are safe within the enclosure of the covenant.

CHAPTER IV.

NECESSITY OF REGENERATION.

The change effected in regeneration is indispensably necessary to salvation.

No doctrine can be more unscriptural, no heresy more dangerous, than that there are men and women, who do not need to be regenerated in order to be saved. Surely, in such a world of semblances, unrealities, and flattering illusions, none need to be reminded that all is not gold that glitters, that the outside of the cup or platter may be clean, while the inside is full of impurity, and that whited and garnished sepulchres may conceal loathsome masses of putridity. Human nature, in its essential elements, is the same in all men, however modified by temper, education, society, or other accidental circumstances. The most amiable in disposition, the most refined in manners, the most orthodox in opinion, the most learned in theology, the most devout in externals, the most magnanimous in sentiment, the most upright and pure in their life, and the most distinguished and applauded for deeds of beneficence, need the renewing of the Holy Spirit as much as

the fierce, the selfish, the ignorant, the erring, the intemperate, the revengeful, the implacable, and the vicious. Religion, since the fall, is not one of those original principles of our nature, which, for their development and perfection, need only to be directed and strengthened by education. Men cannot be trained to piety. Speculations based upon these false ideas, are indeed not uncommon in the philosophy, and, alas that we must add, in the theology of our times.

Amid these speculations, which have exhumed and revived the proud heresy of Pelagius, the doctrines of original sin and total depravity are either denied or ignored: and hence it is not considered, that to attempt to educe religion out of our nature as it is, is as absurd as to attempt to elicit the operations of intellect from an irrational animal. Holy actions must proceed from holy principles; and these must be created in the soul, which, since the fall, is barren of all good. Men must be regenerated, before they can make progress in religion, or perform a single action, which the Searcher of hearts will approve. It is not training that is wanted, but renewing; not progression, but retrogression; not reformation, but transformation; not the education of nature, but a change of nature; not the discipline of powers inherent in the soul, but an infusion into the soul of new powers and principles; in a word, not the development of any spiritual life innate in man, but the impregnation and inter-pene-

tration of man's susceptibilities and faculties with a new and divine life.

But let us proceed to the proof of the doctrine that men must be born again or they cannot be saved.

The necessity of the new birth is evident from a consideration of the actual condition of human nature.

Behold yonder young man! The glow of health lights up his whole being. He is intensely sensitive to whatever affects the body or mind. The beauties of nature, the creations of art, the charms of virtue, the strains of music, the tones of affection stir the depths of emotion in his soul. Look at him again! The mortal struggle is over. That form, lately so buoyant and active, is dressed for burial. Hold a fresh-blown rose before it. Neither the beauty nor the fragrance of the queen of flowers touches its senses. Fire a pistol at its ear. It starts not at the report. The spirit-stirring flow of martial music causes not the eye to sparkle with unwonted brightness, nor the nostrils to dilate with kindling emotions, nor the blood to tingle in the veins, nor the heart to swell with unaccustomed daring. Even the accents of maternal tenderness and love, which but lately caused that manly frame to thrill with emotion, now fall unknown and unheeded on "the dull cold ear of death." Apply every conceivable test of life—light, warmth, sound,

fragrance, beauty, praise, censure, affection—all alike are vain and useless. The man is DEAD. Sensation, emotion, hope, fear, joy, grief, desire, aversion, in him, are perished for ever.

> He hath no share in all that's done
> Beneath the circuit of the sun.

This is natural death, which evidences itself by the absence of all signs of physical life.

Take, now, another case, which affords an example and illustration of spiritual death. Look at that young lady, just opening into womanhood. Amiability, sweetness, gentleness, sympathy, kindness, modesty, affection, decorum, and every womanly grace and excellence are but the definition of her name. In all that relates to nature, art, letters, and society, what vitality! what emotion! what warmth! what earnestness! what variety and glow of affections! what an infinitude of objects court and command her regards and activities! But speak to her of the evil of sin as committed against a holy God, and your words are a sound without a sense. Descant ever so eloquently on the offices and work of Christ, as Atoner, Redeemer, and Intercessor, as Prophet, Priest, and King; and you will be to her as one that sings a very pleasant song in an unknown tongue. As to Jewish eyes of old, so to hers the Saviour has no comeliness to excite desire, no beauty to awaken love. Paint, in colours the most vivid and touching, the holy attractions of

heaven and the dread horrors of perdition; and she will listen to your discourse, in the one case without desire, and in the other, without alarm. Objects the most important, the most engaging, the most desirable, and the most tremendous in the universe, have no power to stir the depths of emotion, or to call forth the vital activities of the soul. Apply every test of spiritual life—the love of God, the compassion of Jesus, the grace of the Spirit, the sympathy of angels, the beauty of holiness, the hatefulness of sin, the bliss of heaven, and the pains of hell;—all are equally powerless to melt or move the heart. Alas! she is DEAD—"dead in trespasses and in sins." There is neither spiritual perception, nor spiritual sensibility, nor spiritual motion. A stupor of spiritual death has seized upon the soul, pervading and paralyzing all its powers and susceptibilities. Before that dead soul can put forth the appropriate actings of a true spiritual life, it is indispensable that a change pass upon it; a change so radical in its nature, and so complete in its effects, that it may fitly be designated, as the Bible has actually designated it, as a resurrection, a re-creation, a new birth, a changing of stone into flesh.

All this is confirmed and strikingly illustrated by an incident in the life of Wilberforce, who once took the great Pitt to hear Cecil preach. The sermon was a copious, clear, and most delightful exhibition of Christ's offices to his church. The soul of the Christian philanthropist was fed,

nourished, and strengthened by the precious truths, set forth with true evangelical unction. On coming out of the church he asked the first Minister of the Crown and the most brilliant orator in Europe, what he thought of the discourse? His reply was remarkable, and at the same time painfully instructive: "I did not understand one word of it from beginning to end."

The necessity of regeneration is apparent from the fact that such a change is essential to a participation in the holy activities and joys of heaven.

This necessity, therefore, is founded in the very nature of things. Every creature, by an original law of its creation, must live in an element and act in a manner suited to its nature. But water is not more uncongenial to birds, nor air to fishes, than the holy society, the holy employments, and the holy pleasures of heaven would be to the unregenerate. Consequently, without a new heart and new spiritual tastes, we can no more enjoy the beatific vision of God, than a being formed for the dry land can live in the depths of the ocean.

The necessity of the new birth in order to salvation results from the holiness of God.

Nothing that defileth or worketh abomination can enter into his presence. Evil shall not dwell with him, neither can he look upon iniquity.

Righteousness and unrighteousness, light and darkness, purity and corruption, sin and holiness, Christ and Belial, the temple of God and idols, heaven and hell, are utterly irreconcilable. They are elements which can by no possibility meet and mingle. It results that, if God and sinners ever dwell together, either he must become unholy, and be like them; or they must become holy, and be like him. Therefore, if God be immutable, the unregenerate cannot be saved; and to expect salvation in the state of unregeneracy is as irrational as to expect that God will abdicate his throne, and cease to be God. If the one is impossible, so is the other.

The necessity of regeneration appears in the mission and work of Jesus Christ.

On what errand did Christ come into this world? To destroy sin; to conquer Satan; to be the physician of souls; to redeem man from iniquity; and to purify to himself a peculiar people. This was the intent of his doing and dying. And can it be supposed that he would have done and suffered so much, or that God would have exacted so painful an obedience from his Son, if men could have obtained salvation at a cheaper purchase, and entered heaven without repentance and a new heart? Besides, if sinners can be saved without regeneration, all the great purposes for which Christ came into the world utterly fail of their accomplishment. In that case, sin is not destroyed, but rather befriended.

Satan is not conquered, but rather strengthened. The soul is not healed, but the plague is left in all its strength and virulence. Men are not redeemed from iniquity, but encouraged in it. There is no peculiar people, purified or otherwise; since the evil and the good, the pure and the impure, shall meet and dwell together in one common heaven. From all which it would follow, that Christ is dead in vain; that his mission, with all its bitter sorrows, was a needless and cruel imposition; and that his whole glorious work is a failure and a nullity. What more horrible blasphemy could be uttered against a just and holy God? What greater indignity could be offered to the compassionate and gracious Redeemer?

The necessity of regeneration is plainly taught in the Bible.

The testimony of Scripture, to this point, is full and clear. No reader of the Holy Book can fail to perceive that, if its authority be admitted, a radical change must take place in every person in order to his being a real Christian. "That which is born of the flesh, is flesh," John iii. 6. "Adam . . . begat a son in his own likeness," Gen. v. 3; that is, possessing his own moral nature, which, after the fall, was corrupt and alienated from the life of God. This declaration undoubtedly refers, not to that particular son alone, but to all his posterity. Believers are described by the evangelist John, as

"born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God," John i. 12. To the Corinthians Paul says, "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new," 2 Cor. v. 17. Here both the necessity of the new birth is affirmed, and its nature summarily exhibited. How comprehensive are the terms of the proposition! Not here and there one, but any man, all men, who are in Christ, are new creatures. All Christians are new-born, and none but Christians can be saved. To such all things are become new. They have new views, new emotions, new purposes, new springs of action, a new life, a new work, a new master, a new inheritance, and a new home.

The change of which we are speaking is called in Scripture a "new heart," a "new spirit," a "new mind," a "new birth," a "new creature." It is termed a "passing from darkness into light," and "from death to life." It is described as a "putting off the old man," and a "putting on the new." These expressions, so remarkably varied, have a pregnant meaning. They denote a mighty change. They signify that, in becoming Christians, we become very different persons, indeed, from what we were before. And this ought to be very seriously considered; for what a slight and superficial thing is that which passes for religion in general! A fair profession, a few lifeless forms, a little outward decency, or at best some faint desires and feeble

efforts make up the whole of it. But the Scripture expressions cited above mean much more than this. They denote an inward change. They denote a great and radical change. They denote a Divine and glorious change.

Moreover, the Scriptures everywhere insist upon the absolute necessity of this change. Our Lord himself, in his conversation with Nicodemus, recorded in the third chapter of John's Gospel, has settled this point of the necessity of regeneration to every son and daughter of Adam. He has there laid it down as the fundamental law of his kingdom, that a man must be born again in order to enter heaven. "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." As a child is a new creature, having newly received a natural life, and been born into the material world; so a Christian is a new creature, having newly received a spiritual life, and been born into the kingdom of grace. How clear and strong are both the words and the sense! No exceptions are made; not one. The expressions are such as necessarily include the race, collectively and individually. No man,—such is the broad import of the terms used,—can be a disciple of Christ and enter into his kingdom without this change. In full harmony with this declaration of our Saviour, is another by the same high authority: "Verily, I say unto you, except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven," Matt. xviii. 3.

The terms here employed are no less plain, no less significant, no less comprehensive, than those quoted from the conversation with Nicodemus. What further proof of the necessity of regeneration can be required, when we have such words from the lips of the Great Teacher himself?

No doubt this doctrine appears strange to those who have studied the writings of philosophers more than those of prophets and apostles. No doubt it is mortifying to the pride and self-sufficiency of the carnal heart. No doubt it is an object of dislike to many, because it gives so humbling a view of our own character and state by nature. But, if the final appeal be to Holy Scripture, it is, beyond a peradventure, the true doctrine. It is confirmed with a "Thus saith the Lord." And, unless we are prepared to reject the whole Bible, we must yield our assent to it as God's truth.

Reader, you must either be born again or perish; you must either turn or die. When the God who made you tells you this, it is time to give heed to the solemn message. When the Saviour who died for you tells you this, it is time to listen to the warning voice. When the Spirit who new-creates you tells you this, it is time to hear as for your life. You are by nature dead in sin; and your damnation is sealed, except you be born again. Whoever tells you otherwise deceives you with a lie. You may put this truth out of your mind, but you cannot put it out of the Bible. There it stands, and

there it will stand to the end, the unalterable truth of God. Let so weighty a truth pierce your soul. Let it break your slumber. Let it awake your fears. Let it stir your anxieties. Let it move you to hear and obey the gracious words which God himself has condescended to address to you, "Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die?"

CHAPTER V.

THE AUTHOR OF REGENERATION.

THE sole author of regeneration, and of all spiritual life, is God the Holy Ghost.

In the work of salvation, each person of the Trinity has his own peculiar province and function; though all concur and co-operate in every part of it. Thus, redemption originated in the love of the Father and his eternal purpose of mercy to lost sinners; it was merited and obtained by the obedience and death of the Son in human nature; and it is applied and made effective by the power of the Holy Spirit, who is the author of spiritual wisdom, faith, repentance, love, and holy living. As, on the one hand, the gracious purpose of the Father could not take effect except through the work of the Son, so, on the other, the work of the Son cannot be efficient without the application of the Spirit. But "the Spirit applieth to us the redemption purchased by Christ by working faith in us, and thereby uniting us to Christ in our effectual calling;" that is, in our regeneration. Hence the Holy Ghost is called, in Scripture, the Spirit of knowledge, the

Spirit of wisdom, the Spirit of power, and the Spirit of revelation in the knowledge of Christ. And love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance, which are graces of the new creature, are declared to be the fruit of the Spirit.

That our Catechism, in the answer just cited, sets forth truly the office-work of the Spirit in regeneration, is clear from many Scripture testimonies. Our Lord's declaration to Nicodemus is explicit: "Except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven." No less unequivocal is the declaration of Paul that we "are saved by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost." The testimony of Peter is to the same effect: "Ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit." The Great Teacher himself affirms: "It is the Spirit that quickeneth." John calls regeneration a "baptism of the Spirit." Paul says that "the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost." These passages are but a specimen of the Scripture testimony to the doctrine, that it is by the omnipotent energy of the Divine Spirit we are born again and introduced to the enjoyment of Christ and all his benefits. Therefore, whenever we find the inspired penman, as we often do, ascribing regeneration to God without any special designation of the Person, God the Holy Ghost is always to be understood as the efficient agent in that work.

The necessity of the special and almighty power of the Holy Spirit in regeneration, is evident from the fact that the change wrought therein is a change from death unto life.

The Scripture hath concluded all in the state of spiritual death (see Eph. ii. 1, and Col. ii. 13). On this point, we lay down the following fundamental principle. All life is of God. This is true of vegetable life, of animal life, and of human life. It would be strange indeed, if spiritual life, the highest and sublimest species of being, formed an exception to this law. In point of fact, no power less than omnipotent can infuse life, where it is wanting.

Here is a dead flower—its freshness faded, its odor gone, its vital energy extinct. Can chemistry or philosophy, with all their boasted power, restore its colour, or fragrance, or living juices to that withered and sapless thing? It cannot be pretended.

Here is a lamb, upon which the relentless knife has just accomplished its work of death. Limb and muscle and tendon and bone and organ are there —all perfect as when it was disporting on the green meadow. Life only is wanting. Can human ingenuity or power give back the vital principle? The galvanic current, insinuating its subtle energy into the muscular fibres, may cause the limbs to start with convulsive motions; but not even an approach to life can be reached through its agency.

See that beautiful infant! It seems to repose in

a sweet and placid slumber. Approach its bedside. Imprint a kiss upon its marble brow. You start back with a shudder! An icy coldness has sealed up the fountains of life; and that lovely form lies stiff and clammy within the embrace of death. Can the skill or genius of man reanimate the dead, and rekindle the living spark within the fair tenement, whence it has fled? Oh, could it once be so, coffers that contain millions should be emptied in return for such a boon. But no! it cannot be. The fortune must be retained, and the stricken heart must bleed, till time and grace shall cicatrize the wound.

To frame the world, to guide the stars, and to restore life to the dead flower, the dead lamb, or the dead child, are equally the issues of an almighty power. Is vegetable life, is animal life, is human life, a more precious thing than spiritual life? There is no comparison. And if man must acknowledge his inability to produce these lower vitalities, how shall he pretend to the power of giving life to a dead soul, whether his own, or that of another? It is a vain pretence, a visionary claim. No man can renew his own heart; no man can renew the hearts of others. All life is of God, from the life of an archangel to the life of a fly.

The need of the almighty power of the Divine Spirit in regeneration is further apparent from the fact that the work is called in Scripture a creation.

"If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature,"

2 Cor. v. 17. "Neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature," Gal. vi. 15. "We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works," Eph. ii. 10. "That ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness," Eph. iv. 24. That the above passages relate to regeneration, will not be disputed. Nor can it any more be denied that they are intended to declare the power by which it is wrought in the soul. If this be so, one of two things must follow: either the metaphor is unhappily chosen, and gives an exaggerated view of the subject; or the same power that called the world into being must be exerted to new create a human soul. We recur, on this head, to the elementary principle that no creature can create. All the philosophers in the world cannot create an insect or an atom. They may change, refine, and variously modify things that are; but by no power or skill which they possess can they give being to the least thing that is not. Much less can any power of man or nature give being to the most excellent of all creatures, the new and Divine principle, the spiritual and heavenly life, formed in the soul by regeneration. To suppose such a thing would be derogatory to the Divine nature; it would be setting the earthly above the heavenly; for that which creates must ever be more glorious than that which is created; and he who builds the house is entitled to more honour than the house.

If we consider the thing to be changed, we must admit the necessity of the supernatural and almighty power of the Spirit in regeneration.

This is the heart of a sinner; concerning which it has been well said by Flavel, that it is no more by nature disposed to this work than the wood laid upon the altar by Elijah was disposed to take fire when he had poured so much water on it as not only wet the wood, but filled up the trench about it.

It is a dark heart; so dark that He who, by an omnipotent fiat, caused the light to shine out of darkness, can alone pierce and scatter the dense folds of its spiritual ignorance. For midnight to pour the radiance of noonday upon the earth would not be a whit more wonderful than for the natural man to cure the blindness of his heart by his own power or skill.

It is a selfish heart; so selfish that all its desires, aims, and doings, centre in self. For the heart to renounce, deny, and break away from this beloved self, take God in Christ as its supreme happiness, and make his glory its chief end, requires a might as much above the powers of nature, as it would to cause the massive rocks to leave their fixed foundations and fly, like wandering meteors, through the heavens.

It is a proud heart; so proud that it naturally disdains and repudiates all righteousness but that

which itself has wrought out; it cannot brook to be dependent on the merit of another for acceptance with God. As well may we look to see a stone, by some power inherent in itself, rise from the earth and fix itself among the stars, as to see this proud heart, by any power or exertion of corrupt nature, take guilt and shame to itself, own itself empty of all goodness, and, in the sense of its utter nakedness and desert of eternal damnation, go to the Saviour and beg to be covered with the robe of his righteousness, to be justified freely by his grace, and to be accepted in the Beloved.

The intrinsic difficulty of the work is such that the omnipotent power of the Holy Ghost alone can overcome it.

Regeneration conquers prejudices the most inveterate, mortifies lusts the most imperious, changes habits the most deeply seated, implants a principle of holiness where everything was opposed to it, reverses the whole bent and bias of the soul, and, by a powerfully attractive influence, draws it in a direction altogether contrary to the stream and current of corrupt nature. It has been said with truth, that there is a greater distance between the terms sin and holiness, corruption and grace, than between those of something and nothing. In the creation of the material universe, there was, it is true, nothing out of which to frame it, but then there was nothing to oppose it; but in regeneration, there is

not only nothing out of which to educe the new creation, but there is everything to oppose it. In the old creation, the conditions were no help and no hindrance; in the new creation, the conditions are no help, but every hindrance.

The exceeding difficulty of the work, and indeed the utter impossibility of accomplishing it by human power, is set forth in the pregnant interrogatory of the prophet Jeremiah, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots?" If omnipotence is required to whiten the dusky skin of the African, to erase the spots of the leopard, and to change the fierceness of the lion into the gentleness of the lamb, much more is such almighty power needed to slay the enmity of the sinner's heart, and to cause him to give up his darling lusts, to forsake the ways of sin, at once so sweet and profitable, to renounce his own best performances and excellences, to come naked and empty to Christ for a share in his righteousness, to forego his own carnal joys, and to delight in the law of God after the inward man. "The new birth," says an excellent old divine, "is a change of nature; of a nature where there was as little of spiritual good, as there was of being in nothing before the creation. It is the change of a stone into flesh; of a heart that, like a stone, has hardness and settledness of sinful parts, a strong resistance against any instrument, an incorporation of sin and lust with its very nature; where the heart and sin, self and sin, are cordially one and

the same. None can change such a nature but the God of all grace. No man can change the nature of the meanest creature in the world. Now, to see a lump of vice become the model of virtue, and him that drank in iniquity like water to thirst after righteousness, to crucify his darling flesh, to be weary of the poison he loved and desire the purity he hated, speaks a supernatural grace, transcendently attractive and powerfully operative."

The marked difference in the success of the gospel, under the same or similar circumstances, shows that the excellency of the power in regeneration is of God and not of man.

Peter preached the gospel to the crowds gathered at Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, and three thousand were converted; Stephen, with no less pungency and power, preached the same gospel to the same people, in the same city of Jerusalem, and was buried beneath a shower of stones. In the one case, the hearers were "pricked in their hearts," and cried out, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" In the other, they were "cut to the heart," but gnashed upon the preacher with their teeth.

When Paul preached at Athens, Dionysius, the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, with a few others, believed and became Christians; but the body of his hearers mocked and derided him.

Under the preaching of the prophet Malachi, a

few had their hearts touched by grace, concerning whom it is said, "They feared the Lord and spake often one to another;" but of the majority of the nation it is recorded that their words were "stout against the Lord," and they said, "It is a vain thing to serve God."

The Master himself often visited Jerusalem, but he gained few disciples there; he spent but two days at Sychar, yet many of the Samaritans in that city believed on him. He spent much time in Capernaum, and preached many sermons there; a few were taken out of the mass, and set as jewels in the Redeemer's crown; but the most repented not: in darkness he found them, and in darkness he left them.

Athens was a city far more cultivated, refined, and moral than Corinth; yet in the former, though the great apostle to the Gentiles preached with an eloquence and a power never surpassed, he gained but few converts; while in the latter, though far less hopeful to human apprehension, he gathered a large and flourishing church.

The two thieves upon the cross were surrounded by the same scene and subjected to the same external influences; one of them prayed, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom," and was that day with Jesus in Paradise; the other joined in the jeers and mockeries of the murderous crowd, and, like Judas, we have reason to think, went unto his own place.

How often in the history of God's grace is that Scripture fulfilled, "Two men shall be in the field, the one shall be taken and the other left; two women shall be grinding at the mill, the one shall be taken and the other left."

Now in what way shall we account for all this, but upon the principle that "neither is he that planteth anything, nor he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase." When Christ does not accompany the word with the almighty power of his Spirit, the preacher speaks and strives but in vain; it is like speaking to the winds and the wild waves of the sea. But when Christ rises from his throne and pours down his Spirit, then the weakest means are infinitely mighty. Then the gospel does not come in word only, but in demonstration of the Spirit and with power. Then, like the stone hurled from the sling of David, it slays the stoutest opposer, and even giants in sin are brought to the dust. If the weapons of our warfare were mighty in themselves, they would at all times be equally successful; but the event makes it manifest that they are mighty only through the might of omnipotence, and that that divine power is exerted in a way of discriminating, sovereign, and invincible grace.

Thus far the argument on this head has been conducted mainly upon grounds of reason. But on a subject of this nature, the chief resort, the ultimate appeal, must be to the sacred record. "To

the law and the testimony, if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."

If we take the Bible for our guide, and yield our faith to its authority, there cannot remain a doubt that God is the sole author of regeneration ; that there is an inward, almighty, and gloriously efficient power of the Holy Ghost exerted to produce the change indicated by that term.

Clear and unequivocal to this effect is the testimony of our Lord in John iii. 5: "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." Much learned and rather unprofitable discussion has been expended upon the inquiry, what we are to understand by the term water in this passage. One interpreter takes it to mean our natural birth; another, the obedience of Christ; a third, baptism; and so on. To enter into speculations of this nature is foreign to the present purpose. With Witsius, we reject all such views, and suppose rather that water is here to be taken as an emblem of the Spirit, as fire is in the passage where we are said to be baptized with the Holy Ghost and with fire. The meaning will then be, that in order to our entering into the kingdom of heaven, we must be born of the Spirit, whose office is to purify the soul, as that of water is to cleanse the body. Nothing is more common with the sacred writers than to represent the Holy

Spirit under the symbol of water. See a proof of this in Isaiah, xliv. 2: "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty; * * * I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed." The same truth is here expressed in two forms, the one figurative, the other literal; the literal being introduced to explain the figurative. But whatever way the term water is interpreted here does not affect the main sense, which is plainly to this purport, that the sole author of the new birth, and of all spiritual life, is God the Holy Ghost.

The same truth is taught, with equal clearness and emphasis, in those passages which speak of our being born from above, of our being born of God, of our being born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. In these Scriptures, the determining cause and efficient agency in our regeneration are wholly taken away from the creature and given to the almighty Creator.

In numerous places of holy writ, God distinctly claims regeneration as his own work. "The Lord thy God will circumcise thy heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart and with all thy soul," Deut. xxx. 6. "I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people," Jer. xxxi. 33. "I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me for ever. . . I will put my fear in their hearts, and they shall not depart from me," Jer. xxxii.

39–40. "I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you, and I will take away the stony heart out of their flesh, that they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them," Ezek. xi. 19, 20. "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh," Ezek. xxxvi. 26. We need not multiply passages to this effect, though it would be easy to do so. Let these suffice. What is the plain instruction to be drawn from them? Surely, not merely that God will aid us in the work of renewing our own hearts and converting ourselves. When God says, again and again, "I will do thus and so for you," it would be a frigid interpretation which would make it mean no more than, "I will assist you to do it." The heart, that is, our entire moral and sentient nature, the seat and principle of all spiritual exercises, is compared to a stone; by which is signified its total unaptness for, and stubborn opposition to, all spiritual motions. Now this inaptitude and stubbornness, this impotence and enmity to God, this total inability to all good, God says that he will take away; and not only so, but that he will give, in its place, a new heart and a new spirit, by virtue of which we shall be his people, and walk in his statutes, and keep his ordinances, and do them. He does not say that he will endeavour to do all this, that he will use means to do it, that he will help those who

undertake the work for themselves; but he says, absolutely and positively, that he himself will do it. So distinctly and emphatically does God challenge the work of regeneration as his own.

Other Scriptures innumerable are to the same general purport. "No man can come to me," says the Saviour, "except the Father who has sent me draw him," John vi. 44; and again in vs. 65, "No man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father." This strips the whole human race of all power to renew their own hearts. "No man can come unto me." Not an individual of the human family, whatever his natural qualifications or external advantages, however he may be disposed or prepared, whatever arguments or means may be used with him, whether wise and learned, or ignorant and illiterate—no man can of himself come to Christ, can believe on him, can renew his own heart. This must be given to him from above; he must be powerfully drawn by a divine influence. The same thing is asserted, both negatively and positively, in Eph. ii. 8: "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God." The apostle here draws a contrast between our ability and the gift of God, and affirms that salvation has its source in the latter, to the exclusion of the former. And further, he informs us in verse 10, how God bestows this gift upon us, viz., by creating us anew in Christ Jesus, as his own workmanship.

Illustrious is the testimony of the apostle in Phil. ii. 13: "It is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."

A signal proof of the need of Divine power in regeneration we have in Jer. xvii. 14, and xxxix. 13: "Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved; turn me, and I shall be turned." Two things are declared in these Scriptures, as plainly as language can perform that office; first, that God alone is the author of conversion; secondly, that when he undertakes the work, it is effectually done. What is the plain instruction of this text? We have a three-fold lesson here: first, that God, by his effectual working, gives the will to do good; secondly, that, by a like efficient operation, he imparts the ability to put that will into execution; and thirdly, that in all this he acts as a sovereign, who giveth no account of his matters.

Other Scriptures assure us that God "works in us that which is well pleasing in his sight;" that he "begets us anew to a lively hope;" and that he "fulfils in us the work of faith with power;—all bearing concurrent testimony to the doctrine, that there is an immediate and efficient divine operation upon the soul in the new birth.

Most significant and instructive, in this connection, is the parable of the dry bones in Ezekiel's vision. Those bones were not only without life, but without any desire for life, or any power in themselves to recover it. They lay motionless and dead

in the open valley, till the Spirit of God breathed upon them, and sent life and power and motion into them. So the sovereign and almighty power of the Holy Ghost calls us from the death of sin, and creates us anew in the divine image. He wakes us out of sleep. He softens our hard hearts. He convinces us of sin. He shows us our misery. He enlightens our darkness. He renews our perverted and rebellious will. He makes us willing in the day of his power. He gives us power to embrace and appropriate Christ as our Saviour. Thus are we enabled to discern spiritually, to feel spiritually, and to judge spiritually. Thus do we desire, choose, hope, and act as possessed of a new life, even the life of God infused into the soul by his regenerating grace.

God the Holy Ghost, then, is the sole author of spiritual life. But we must not thence infer that the soul of man is a mere lump of clay, lying wholly inert and passive under his hand. Figures drawn from natural objects, and used to illustrate spiritual truths may, if we are not careful to make the proper distinctions, lead us into pernicious error, by causing us to push the analogies too far, and to apply them to points where the likeness totally fails. The sluggishness and senselessness of matter cannot, in any absolute sense or under any circumstances, be predicated of the human soul. Man is endowed with understanding, reason, thought, will, conscience, affections, and the power of choice; at-

tributes entirely wanting in the things from which the figures are drawn.

"The natural heart," says an able divine, "is indeed dead in sin, wholly inclined to evil, and can therefore bring forth no good thing. But the death of a spiritual, immortal, and ever-active soul, is as different from the death of the body, as spirit is different from matter. The dead body is wholly motionless and unconscious; but the dead soul is willingly and intelligently active in wickedness. There is a will in the dead soul, and although that will is in bondage to Satan, it is still will, and it is in bondage because the heart loves sin. Hence, though our conversion is the work of the Holy Spirit, the sinner is commanded to 'turn unto God,' and he is condemned for not repenting, because by his impenitence he doth 'always resist the Holy Ghost,' and 'will not come unto Christ that he might have life.' There is a difficulty here, it is admitted, but it is not a practical difficulty. Every sinner knows that he continues to sin voluntarily; and every reader of the Scripture knows that, if he 'yield himself to God,' the Spirit will take possession of his heart; and every one who puts these two truths together must know that, if he be not converted, it is his own fault, because he has not only neglected striving to enter the strait gate, but has struggled against the Spirit lest he should be brought to enter. Dependence upon the grace of the Holy Ghost for a new life is no excuse or war-

rant for our idleness, but, on the contrary, rebukes it; else there were no meaning in the command, 'make you a new heart and a new spirit;' or in the promise, 'they that seek shall find;' or in the condemnation of them who have not 'believed on the name of the only begotten Son of God.'" (Bethune on the Fruit of the Spirit.)

It has been much discussed whether the subjects of regeneration are active or passive at the moment when the change takes place. This question, like that which has been raised concerning the order of time in which faith and repentance spring up in the soul, is rather speculative and curious than practical and important. For as these two graces can never be separated, but must necessarily co-exist in the soul, though in the order of nature faith must be supposed to precede and work repentance; so, in regeneration, the soul must be conceived to be passive at the instant of its occurrence, since men of themselves no more contribute to their spiritual than to their natural birth, yet in the very nature of things, the spiritual activities commence at the same point of time. No sooner is grace infused into the soul, than, as a necessary consequence, gracious affections and gracious actings begin to manifest themselves. Hence, I have always regarded as eminently sound and scriptural the ground taken by President Edwards on this point, in his Observations concerning Efficacious Grace, viz., that in efficacious grace we are not merely passive, nor yet

does God do a part of the work, and we the rest. But God does all, and we do all. God produces all, and we act all; for indeed the very things which God produces are our own actions, since, as the apostle teaches, he works in us to DO. God is the fountain and author of our spiritual activities, while we ourselves are the proper actors.

This explains and reconciles many passages of Holy Writ, which, on a superficial view, seem inconsistent and contradictory. The Scriptures, in numerous places, represent the same things as from God and from us. Thus God is said to sprinkle clean water upon us and cleanse us from all our filthiness; and we are commanded to wash and cleanse ourselves. God is said to give us a new heart and a new spirit; and we are commanded to make us a new heart and a new spirit. God is said to turn us; and we are commanded to turn ourselves. God is said to heal our backslidings; and we are commanded to return from our backslidings. God is said to circumcise our hearts; and we are commanded to circumcise our own hearts. God is said to keep us from falling; and we are commanded to take heed lest we fall. God is said to keep us from departing from him; and we are commanded not to depart from his ways. God is said to confirm us to the end; and we are commanded to endure to the end. God is said to give repentance and faith; and we are commanded to repent and believe. All this is agreeable to that clear and un-

equivocal declaration of Paul, "God worketh in you both to will and to do;" and that no less clear and unequivocal ascription by Isaiah of all our good works to God's efficiency, "Thou also hast wrought all our works in us."

At this point it is proper, in passing, to distinguish between regeneration and conversion. It is precisely the distinction, noticed in the preceding paragraph, between what God does and what men do in the commencement of the divine life. In regeneration, God infuses spiritual life into the soul; in conversion, the sinner puts forth the appropriate actings of this new life. In regeneration, God draws; in conversion, we run after him. In regeneration, a power is given; in conversion, that power is exercised. In regeneration, the will is acted upon; in conversion the will acts. Regeneration is a spiritual change; conversion is a spiritual motion. Regeneration is a *principle* of activity imparted; conversion is the action produced by that principle. Regeneration is grace bestowed; conversion is grace used. Regeneration is the movement of God towards and upon the sinner; conversion is the movement of the sinner towards God, consequent thereupon.

The mode of the Spirit's operation on the human soul in regeneration is hid from the eyes of all living. This is one of the secret things which belong to God, and is wrapped in profoundest mystery. So our Saviour has taught us in his conversation

with Nicodemus, John iii. 8: "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit." Three things are intimated here, viz., the mystery, the reality, and the variety of the Spirit's work in regeneration.

1. It is mysterious. There are innumerable phenomena, even in the natural world, which, as to their causes and processes, defy all explanation. Of these one of the most wonderful and unfathomable is our natural birth. Who can declare its secrets? The Psalmist, in the contemplation of this marvel, could only exclaim, "I am fearfully and wonderfully made." But if the most sagacious are baffled in their inquiries into the origin and mode of our bodily life, who shall explore and unfold the origin and mode of our spiritual life? If an impenetrable darkness shuts out all knowledge of the former, how much more of the latter!

2. The work of the Spirit in regeneration is none the less real because mysterious. Its mystery is no argument against its verity. "The application of the figure," says Bloomfield, "is that a man knows that his heart is more interested in religion, that he has a deeper insight and greater relish for spiritual truths; and though he does not perceive the immediate influence from which this change proceeded, yet the effects he knows by communing with his own heart. And they are of a kind which he

must ascribe to the Author of all good, though he cannot trace the exact process by which that heavenly agency was employed for that effect; yet he does not the less believe its reality."

3. This operation of the Spirit in the new birth, though ever the same in its essence, is, like the blowing of the wind, endlessly varied in its circumstances. We see the pliant willow bend gently before the vernal zephyr; we see the grass, the flowers, and the golden grain wave gently in the summer breeze. So gently, at times, does the Holy Spirit breathe upon a human soul; so calm, so placid, so lovely, and so pure are the influences which invite to thought, to prayer, to God, to heaven. Again, we see the heavens gather blackness—the lightnings play, the thunder rolls, the tempest howls, the tornado sweeps over hill and vale, the roots of the sturdy oak are uptorn, and the massive and stately structure quivers in every timber. With such overwhelming power does the Spirit of God sometimes assault the soul of man; and the stout-hearted sinner trembles under the influence of the truth, as the giant elm quivers beneath the wintry blast, or bends before the rushing whirlwind. He sees, as it were, the clouds of wrath gather; he hears the thunder of justice; flashes from Sinai dart along his guilty path; and he is prostrated before the power of God, like the forest before the sweeping and resistless tempest. But as in nature the storm passes by, the clouds are scattered, the winds are

hushed, the sun re-appears, and the earth smiles afresh in beauty and serenity; so the soul, torn and prostrated by the terrors of the law, feels the sweet inflowing of gospel peace and joy, and all its agitations subside into a heavenly calm, when it hears the voice of pardon, and the hope of immortal glory first dawns upon its darkness.

Reader, there are solemn lessons embodied for thee in this doctrine of the Spirit's agency in the work of regeneration.

1. How wicked, foolish, and dangerous it is to resist the Holy Ghost! To fight against the Spirit of God is to fight against the life of thy own soul, since upon his presence and power within thee thy spiritual life and all thy immortal hopes depend. "He that sinneth against God wrongeth his own soul."

2. How much need hast thou to offer the prayer of the Psalmist, "Take not thy Holy Spirit from me!" That prayer has a significance, of which most men have but a very inadequate conception. When God takes away his Holy Spirit from a man finally and for ever, when he says of any human being, "My Spirit shall no longer strive with him," "Ichabod" may be written upon his whole being. The glory is departed. All his hopes for eternity are gone. The light of life is extinguished. His damnation is sealed. There can remain, to such an one, naught but a fearful looking for of "judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries."

3. Take courage from the Divine testimony that God is more willing to give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him, than parents are to give good things to their children. What a sweet, comforting, reassuring similitude! How willing is the tender mother, how ready the affectionate father, to bestow even the most precious gifts upon a beloved child! But their readiness to impart earthly benefits is surpassed by that of our heavenly Father to impart a gift more precious than earth contains; a gift, such as heaven itself has no other equal or similar; the gift of the Holy Ghost in his renewing, sanctifying, and saving power. Reader, ask even that gift, in the name of Christ, feeling thy need of it, and thou shalt receive it, and with it, as its fruit and issue, eternal life.

CHAPTER VI.

THE INSTRUMENT OF REGENERATION.

Regeneration is wrought instrumentally by the word of God.

THE reading and preaching of the word is the principal means appointed for bringing men to Christ, and so of converting and saving their souls. This is well expressed in the shorter Catechism, thus: "The Spirit of God maketh the reading, but especially the preaching of the word, a means of convincing and converting sinners, and of building them up in holiness and comfort, through faith unto salvation."

The power of the word in convincing, enlightening, and renewing men, is distinctly, as well as repeatedly, declared in the sacred record.

The great commission to the ambassadors of Christ is, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature;" and the promise annexed, "he that believeth shall be saved," shows the design of the gospel to be the salvation of those who

hear it. Accordingly, the apostle affirms: "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." To the same effect he speaks: 2 Cor. v. 20: "Now, then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us (*i. e.* in our preaching of the gospel); we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."

Paul, in 1 Cor. iv. 15, declares himself to be the spiritual father of the Christians at Corinth, having, as he says, "begotten them through the gospel." Here the gospel—the word preached—is, unequivocally, represented as the instrument of their spiritual birth, that is, of their regeneration.

"The weapons of our warfare," says Paul, (meaning the truths of the gospel,) "are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds; casting down imaginations and every high thing which exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." This is a graphic description of a genuine change of heart; and, while the honour of the efficient agency in the work is distinctly claimed by God, the instrumental agency is no less clearly ascribed to his word.

To the same effect, but still more emphatically, the same apostle says, in Heb. iv. 12: "The word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and

marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." No heart is so hard, no conscience so seared, but this weapon can pierce it through and through.

That the means employed by the Divine Spirit in regenerating dead souls is the word of God, is still further evident from 1 Pet. i. 23, where we are said to be "born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." The natural birth and the spiritual birth of men are here compared in their causes and effects. The instrumental cause of the former is ordinary generation; the instrumental cause of the latter is the word of God. The life produced by the one is corruptible and mortal; the life produced by the other is incorruptible and immortal, like the divine word of which it is begotten, and which, the apostle tells us, liveth and abideth for ever. The leading thought in the mind of the apostle, the great lesson he would convey, is the true place and agency of the word in regeneration, viz: that of a means or instrument.

No less clear and decisive is the testimony of James: "Of his own will begat he us, by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first fruits of his creatures." Three things are taught in this passage: 1. That the original and source of the new birth is in the sovereign will of God. 2. That the means of this good work is the word of truth, the gospel of the Son of God. 3. That the design

of this gracious renovation is, that we may be God's portion and treasure, consecrated to him, even as the first fruits were under the law.

David bears witness to the same truth, in a glow of holy exultation over the living and quickening power of the divine word: "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes," Ps. xix. 7, 8. The connection in which this passage stands, is instructive. The former part of the psalm is a magnificent and glowing description of the visible heavens. Wrapped in the contemplation of the glorious power and wisdom of God, as displayed in those worlds of light hung out in the firmament above him, the writer pours forth a strain of sublimities unsurpassed in the whole range of descriptive poetry. He is charmed with the beauty of the stupendous and dazzling scene; he is awed by its sublimity; he draws instruction from the majestic movement of those starry worlds; and with the eloquence of inspired genius, he commends to all the children of mortality the lucid lessons they convey. But suddenly he arrests himself amid the rush and glow of his lofty imagination; he descends from his adventurous flight amid suns and stars; he comes to read a better lesson in a better volume. "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul." He found

sublime instruction in the works of God; but in his word alone he found the lesson of perfection. "The law of the Lord converts the soul." Nature cannot do this. Philosophy cannot do it. Regeneration never yet came from any influences of the one, or any speculations of the other. Man needs the truth found only in the Bible to convert him to God; he must have that truth, or perish in his unregeneracy and sin.

With this didactic statement of the doctrine accords the whole history of God's grace.

Let me call the reader's attention to a single one of this class of proofs,—the record contained in Acts ii. 37: "When they heard this (Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost, a plain and pungent proclamation of the gospel), they were pricked in the heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, 'Men and brethren, what shall we do?'" Three thousand were converted as the fruit of that sermon in one day; and how many more afterwards, we have no means of knowing. "The incorruptible seed of the word," being quickened by the Holy Spirit, produced its designed and appropriate fruit.

The cry uttered by those thousands on the day of Pentecost has been repeated by unnumbered millions since; by men of every age, of every clime, of every colour, of every condition. The honourable and the ignoble, the renowned and the obscure, the

learned and the ignorant, the rich and the poor, the wise and the foolish, the monarch and the slave—have all in turn felt the soul-piercing, soul-subduing, soul-restoring power of gospel truth, as read on the printed page, or heard from the living voice.

The word of God, which the Holy Spirit thus employs in converting men, is comprised in two great departments, called the law and the gospel.

Each of these has its appointed and appropriate function in the work.

The law flashes conviction into the sinner's conscience. It shows him his guilt and condemnation. It reveals to him his danger. It lays open to his view the deformity and misery of his natural life. Like a hammer it breaks in pieces his false peace. Like a sword, it slays all his self-righteous hopes. It drives him from his refuges of lies. It convinces him of his need of a justifying righteousness, and of his inability to obtain such a righteousness by his own works. And it awakens in him an earnest desire to be delivered from what he now sees and feels to be a degrading and miserable bondage.

When the law has thus accomplished its work of conviction, the gospel comes to him with its proclamation of mercy. Its office is to heal the wounds of sin, and bring spiritual health to the soul. It exhibits Christ as the surety of all those who believe in him. It makes known his willingness to save, and the fulness and suitableness of his merit

and grace. It freely offers his salvation to all who will accept it on the terms of repentance and faith, to be followed by the fruits of holy living. It shows the sinner, at the same time, the excellence of that spiritual life, of which Christ is at once the author, the model, and the reward. It presses him, by the most powerful motives and the most persuasive exhortations, to deny all carnal appetites and give himself up to be new moulded and formed by the Spirit of God.

Thus, by the united operation of the law and the gospel, wielded by the almighty power of the Divine Spirit, is the conscience roused, the mind enlightened, the will subdued, the affections rectified, true penitence awakened, hatred of sin begotten, the heart renewed, and all the graces of the Spirit wrought in the soul and made to abound in the life.

Such, according to the clear teaching of God's word, is the truth as it is in Jesus.

But it is to be carefully noted, and never forgotten, that the word of God is only the instrumental, and not at all the efficient cause of regeneration.

If the truth were sufficient of itself, all who hear might be expected to receive and obey it; nay, they certainly would receive and obey it; for whatever works naturally, works necessarily; as leaven, for example, always permeates and enlivens dough when deposited in it. If, therefore, the converting

power of the word were inherent in it, it would infallibly convert all to whom it comes, unless we suppose some miracle to supervene and prevent it. It is the Spirit that quickens. Separated from the efficient power of the Spirit, the word can accomplish nothing. The word, says an inspired penman, is the sword of the Spirit. Now, as a sword must be wielded by a strong arm to accomplish any useful purpose, so must the word be wielded by the Spirit to effect the conversion of men. It has been said that if men were as eloquent as the Holy Ghost, they could regenerate sinners as well as he; a proposition which implies that the change wrought in regeneration is produced wholly by the power of moral suasion. According to this view, men are converted in the same way they are induced to engage in any worldly enterprise—by the mere force of light and argument; a theory as dangerous as it is unscriptural, as destructive to the souls of men as it is derogatory to the power and grace of God. The trumpet gives no sound, till the breath of a man is breathed into it; the mantle of Elijah parted not the waters of Jordan, till the Lord God of Elijah gave it power to that end; the wheels of Ezekiel moved not, till the Spirit moved them; in like manner, the word of God has no efficiency except what it derives from the Spirit of God, working in and by it. That radical change of the mind, the will, the affections, and the life, in which the new birth consists, is not wrought in the soul effici-

ently by the power of the truth, however clearly seen or strongly felt, but by the immediate, sovereign, and almighty power of God the Holy Ghost.

Nevertheless truth, the truth as it in Jesus, is the means chosen and appointed of God for the regeneration of men. Now, on the one hand, God has proclaimed and diffused his truth among men; and thus HE is using the means of regeneration. On the other hand, some unregenerate men are, and all ought to be, in different ways, directing their minds to the truth of God; and thus *they* are, or should be, using the means of regeneration. It is essential to a just view of this subject, that we distinguish between the means of regeneration, as used by God and by the unregenerate themselves.

God employs these means with entire sincerity and in a great variety of forms. He instructs, admonishes, warns, invites, persuades, allures, and pleads with men, with unutterable tenderness and solemnity. His language is, "Oh, that they were wise." "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked." "Come now, and let us reason together." "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim?" "Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely." It is thus that God, with compassionate urgency, uses the means of regeneration with unregenerate men.

What remains, then, but that the unregenerate themselves should respond to this benevolent concern and importunity of God by a sincere and dili-

gent use of the agencies appointed of God for the renewing and saving of their souls? For, surely, if fit agencies have been instituted by God, men are bound, by every obligation of gratitude and every motive of personal well-being, to make such use of them as may answer the end of their institution; otherwise, it is of little moment, so far as they are concerned, whether these means have been appointed or not.

The means of regeneration are all comprised under the general designation of the revealed truth of God. But the application of this inspired truth is manifold. The forms, under which the one great instrumentality may be used, are many and various. The chief of these are the reading of God's word; attendance upon the instruction and worship of the sanctuary; the sanctification of the Sabbath; the religious services of the family; and prayer—public, social, and private. Now, it is unquestionably the duty of unconverted men to make use of all these instrumentalities. It were as well to be without the Bible, if men do not read it. It were as well to be without the ministry of reconciliation, if men do not attend upon it. It were as well to be without the Sabbath, if men do not observe it. It were as well to be without household devotions, if it is no harm to disregard and neglect such exercises. It were as well to be without the privilege of prayer, if men may, with innocence, refuse to draw nigh to God.

I repeat then, that unconverted men are bound to use all these agencies diligently, faithfully, and perseveringly. No inherent and saving efficacy is claimed for the use of means. But it is claimed that the tendency of such use is to enlighten the understanding; to impress the conscience; to convince of sin; to awaken a salutary anxiety; to produce a reverence for God and dread of his anger; to show the sinner the hardness, stubbornness, and obstinacy of his own heart; to exhibit their own want of intrinsic efficacy; and to bring home the conviction that some higher power is needed in order to a genuine work of regeneration, even the omnipotence of the Holy Spirit.

While it is undoubtedly true that regeneration is very far from being a uniform consequence of means, it is no less true that means are the ordinary antecedent of regeneration. There can be no hesitation in affirming that those who use the means are more likely to be saved than those who do not. The probability here is all on one side of the question. To deny this would be to impeach the wisdom of God in appointing means. Men *may* be lost, who use the means of regeneration; but they *must* be lost, in the total neglect of them. Eternal life may not crown the use of means, since they may be used in a wrong way, from wrong motives, and to a wrong end; but eternal death is the certain issue to those who persistently neglect them. The common sense and common sentiment of man-

kind affirm this view. When we see persons anxious about their souls, when we behold them diligent in the study of the Bible, in attendance upon the sanctuary, in prayer, in seeking the society and converse of the godly, and in other exercises of religion, we are filled with hope concerning them. But when the reverse of all this is seen in them, when they appear indifferent and hardened, and live in the neglect of all the ordinary means of grace, our minds are filled with anxious forebodings in reference to their eternal state.

Yet I must not leave this subject just here. To stop at this point would be to "daub with untempered mortar," and to "heal the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly." A wrong and, in the issue, a fatal use may be made of this doctrine. It may be perverted into an occasion of self-righteous pride and dangerous delay. Unconverted men, who have been awakened to some concern about their souls, and stirred up to some degree of diligence in the use of means, may be flattered by it into the delusion that they are doing well enough, and have only to persevere in their present course to secure salvation. When men cannot satisfy their consciences in a total neglect of religion, they are prone to have recourse to something short of it. This refuge is, not seldom, the means of grace; but it is "a refuge of lies." To use means and trust in such use is certain death to the soul. This is to make a Christ of them. Therefore let me say to all unregen-

erate persons, and in so saying I do but reflect and repeat the plain teaching of the word of God, that your first and instant duty is to go to Christ, to believe on him, to submit to his government, and to enter into his service. As long as you reject Christ, it matters not how great your anxiety is, nor how diligent you may be in using means. You are still an enemy of God, and under his wrath and curse. There is no certainty that you will ever obtain mercy. God is under no obligation to show you mercy. Nor will he ever do so, while you stay away from Christ, for all your fasts and prayers and tears and cries. Nay, your conduct is especially provoking to God in that, despite your convictions, your alarm, and your anxiety, you still stand it out against Christ, and will not accept the offered Saviour, though clearly seeing that without him you must perish. Therefore, the only direction I have to give you is: "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ." When the Scripture says to you, "Behold the Lamb of God," meet that offer promptly, fully, cordially; trust your soul and all the high interests of your immortality into the hands of this Saviour; put your hope of eternal life just where God puts it, in the merits and mediation of his Son; do all this with that simple confidence which a child can feel as well as an archangel; and that moment you are a Christian, a regenerated, pardoned, justified, and saved man or woman. That is the gospel plan of salvation in its essence and vitality. All else is a

delusion and a falsehood. All else is but like the apples of Sodom, fair to the sight, but dust and ashes to the touch. All else will leave you at last to make your bed in hell, and to lie down amid everlasting burnings.

CHAPTER VII.

FRUITS AND EVIDENCES OF REGENERATION.

REGENERATION produces, in those who are the subjects of it, marked and visible fruits; which fruits constitute so many tokens and evidences of the believer's personal experience of the happy change.

In 2 Cor. v. 17, the change which takes place in passing from the state of nature to the state of grace is set forth, as to its effects, in the following terms: "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." This description is brief, but clear and emphatic. It is a change equivalent to a new creation, since it is called by that name. This expression, however, must be limited by the nature of the subject. The change is a moral one. The properties and powers of the soul are not altered; these remain as they were. The change is in the state and qualities of the soul; and here the alteration is radical, thorough, complete, all-pervading. This change takes place, not merely in the abandoned, debased, and notorious offender, but even in

men the most moral, the most amiable, and the most exemplary in all the civil and social relations of life.

And here we must descend to some detail, and in doing so we will notice the following particulars. The truly regenerate have new views and feelings with respect to God, Christ, ordinances, sin, holiness, the Bible, themselves, Christians, sinners, the world, time, and eternity; and, besides these internal fruits of regeneration, which evidence themselves to the renewed man's own consciousness, there will be an outward reformation, a new manner of life, which will be manifest to his fellow-men.

The regenerated man's apprehensions of God and emotions towards him are different from what they were before.

He regards God as a real being more than he did. His existence, perfections, and presence are something more to him than a name. Before, he seldom thought of God, and when he did, the thought was painful, and therefore banished as speedily as possible; now God is seldom out of his thoughts, and he thinks of him with delight. He sees God in his works, and enjoys him in his gifts. The air, the light, the genial warmth of the sun, the birds, the flowers, food, raiment, shelter, friends—all the bounties of providence are to him what God makes them. God himself is in these enjoyments; and it is because the divine goodness is tasted in them that they are

so precious to him. He looks up to God, he confides in God, he loves God as a Father. He chooses God as the portion of his soul. He seeks and finds his highest happiness in communion with God. How bright, how amiable, how dear do the divine perfections appear to him! Especially the divine goodness and love, how sweet and ravishing the view he is, sometimes, at least, permitted to take of them!

The new man has new views of Christ and new exercises towards him.

"To them that believe he is precious." Before, Christ was without form or comeliness; there was no beauty in him to awaken desire. Now, he is the chief among ten thousand, altogether lovely, the rose of Sharon, the lily of the valley. The beauty of his person, the beauty of his character, the beauty of his government, the beauty of his redemption, the preciousness of his blood, in a word, his entire suitableness to the needs of a sinner, are seen and realized as they never were before. Christ is the fountain in which the Christian is continually washing his guilty soul from the stains of sin; Christ is the rock continually giving out living water, of which the Christian drinks and is refreshed; Christ is the treasury of grace, from which the Christian draws in every time of his necessity. And there are times when all language is too feeble to express the strength of his gratitude, too cold to

breathe out the warmth of his affection to the beloved of his soul.

To the soul that has been born from above, divine ordinances have a value and a relish, which they never had before.

Formerly they were a burden, now they are his joy. Before conversion the Sabbath was clothed in gloom, now it is the brightest day of the seven. He feels as the holy Psalmist did: "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts!" The songs of Zion, how pleasant! the prayers, how solemn! the doctrine, how refreshing! the sacraments, what wells of salvation! The breath of prayer is sweet. "Behold, he prayeth," was the first token of the new birth in Paul. A prayerless Christian is a solecism in language, a contradiction in terms, an utter impossibility. The renewed soul delights to draw near to God, to enter within the veil, to lie down at the feet of Jesus, and to pour its groans and its tears into his ear and his heart.

The new birth is accompanied with new views of sin.

Formerly sin was loved, cherished, and delighted in; rolled as a sweet morsel under the tongue. There was little sense of sin, little concern about it, little dread of committing it, little sorrow for it after it had been committed. The guilt of innumerable sins lay upon the soul with no more than a feather's weight. But now what a change! What discoveries

the new-born soul has of the exceeding sinfulness of sin. It is seen to be an evil and a bitter thing, a filthy and abominable thing, an awfully dangerous thing. It is felt to be a heavy burden, a load under which the Redeemer, though it was not his own, and only imputed to him, sunk in death. The regenerated soul looks at sin in the glass of the cross. Sin, he says, crucified my Lord, and shall not I crucify it? Thus he meditates revenge against it, a holy revenge; such a revenge as, in the words of good Matthew Henry, "will be no breach of the law of charity."

The new-born soul has new thoughts and exercises in respect to holiness.

Before a saving change had been experienced, holiness was distasteful and repulsive. A holy God, a holy Sabbath, a holy law, a holy walk, a holy heaven even, with its holy associations of saints and angels, kindled no longings, excited no complacent or pleasing emotions. But now holiness is the soul's most congenial element. It delights in holy employments, holy society, holy conversation, holy meditation, holy worship, holy pleasures, holy living, and, above all, in the anticipation of a holy heaven, of which a holy Saviour is the central attraction.

Regeneration is attended with new views of truth, as contained in the Bible.

Once there was no relish for the word of God, no

delight in it. If read at all, it was read as a duty and a task, without self-application, without growth in true spiritual knowledge. Other books were preferred to the Bible; other truth was more relished than divine truth. God's word was a sapless, lifeless, tasteless thing. But how changed is all this when the man is renewed! Now the Bible is precious. David has well expressed the feeling of such an one towards the divine word, when he pronounces it "sweeter than honey and the honeycomb." He delights in it. He has appetite for it. He has spiritual understanding of it. He has growth from it. He has security from it; it is the shield with which he wards off the fiery darts of the adversary. In fine, he rejoices in it as one that findeth great spoil.

The new man has new judgments concerning himself.

He is no longer his own centre. He no longer claims any property in himself, nor assumes to be master of his own actions. He looks upon himself as belonging to God, and as bound to make it the great employment of his whole life to serve him, to advance his glory, to root out sinful habits, and to abound in holy living. A converted sinner often stands astonished at his former conduct. He wonders at his former boldness in sin. He trembles at the remembrance of his former state. And to think what a change has been wrought in him, excites the

liveliest gratitude to God for the riches of his abundant grace.

The man who has been created anew in Christ Jesus has new feelings towards Christians.

The image of Christ in them makes them dear to him. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." This is Christ's own mark of discipleship. Every one that loveth is born of God. The Psalmist assures us that all his delight was in the saints, the excellent of the earth. The joy of Christian communion is a joy precious to the Christian's heart in proportion to the liveliness and vigour of divine grace in his own soul.

Sinners are regarded by the regenerate with emotions never before felt towards them.

Compassion to sinners was a main feature in the character of Christ. This brought him from his throne. This clothed him in human flesh. This made him weep over Jerusalem. This bowed his head in death. This makes him wait upon sinners, knocking at the door of their hearts, till his locks are wet with the drops of the night. All Christ's people are like him. The same spirit dwells in them. The same heart throbs in their breast. While the wicked ways of sinners are abhorred, compassion, pity, tenderness, and love are felt towards their souls. Tears are wept over them in

secret. Earnest prayers ascend for their conversion. Words of solemn warning and tender entreaty are addressed to them. In short, the feeling of the renewed soul towards all who are out of Christ is, "O, taste and see that the Lord is good."

The renewed man's estimate of the world is different from what it was before his conversion.

Then the world was all smiles and roses. There was fascination in its money, fascination in its applause, fascination in its honours, fascination in its beauty, fascination in its gaieties, and fascination in its pleasures. It seemed a very paradise of sweets. How ardently the heart loved it! How eagerly the hands pursued it! How entirely the soul was engrossed by it! But now the charm is broken. Its false but dazzling colours are dashed out. Gold, fame, rank, power, beauty, and pleasure are looked upon as deceitful and fugitive goods. Great prosperity and great temptations are now linked together in his thoughts. Genius, learning, wealth, and station, no longer form the balances in which he weighs men; but moral qualities have become the standard of his judgments. "A Christian in a cottage appears more amiable than a blasphemer in a palace."

The converted man estimates time differently from what he ever did before.

There is nothing more precious than time; and

yet there is nothing of which unconverted men are more careless or more prodigal. Like silver in the days of Solomon, it is "nothing accounted of" by them. They spend it in idleness, in revelling, in gathering sordid dust, in foolish jesting, in envious detraction or idle gossip, in the silly chase of fame, or honour, or pleasure. They talk as if they had a great deal more than they needed or knew what to do with; they contrive ingenious methods of wasting and consuming it; they even speak of "killing time," as if it were an enemy to be put out of the way. Indeed, if men squandered money as they squander time, they would be thought fit subjects for the madhouse. But when a man is converted, what a different estimate does he put on time! Now it seems to him, as it truly is, the most valuable of all treasures, infinitely more precious than gold or rubies, because a happy or a miserable eternity depends upon the good or ill use he makes of it. The Master's estimate of time is expressed in the solemn declaration: "I must work the work of him that sent me, while it is day; the night cometh." So does every true believer look at time.

The regenerate person has new impressions and new judgments of things unseen and eternal.

Before he was born again, the vanities of time filled his thoughts, engaged his affections, engrossed his pursuits. The world and the things of the

world were all in all to him. Eternity seldom crossed his mind, and when it did, the thought was quickly shaken off as an unwelcome intruder. But now the world of sense sinks, and the world of spirits rises in his esteem. Death, judgment, and eternity, with their endless awards of weal or woe, are frequently and strongly in his thoughts. They no longer appear to him as idle tales, in which he has little or no concern, but as living and stupendous realities, in which he is vitally, essentially, profoundly interested. Eternity flashes a light into his soul, which reveals the hideous deformity of sin, corrects the false representations of sense, and shows him how baseless are the claims of earthly gratification. Man's grand concern is with his eternal state. It is not this moment of mortal life, it is not this first brief stage of his existence, it is not this vision of an hour, that should engage his thoughts, command his affections, and call into vital and vigorous action the energies of his soul. No! it is what he is to be for ever; it is what God thinks of him, and what God will do with him in eternity. This is the great question; this is the grand concern; and so the renewed soul feels it to be, at least in his more serious and collected moments.

Although outward reformation does not of itself constitute regeneration, yet such reformation is a uniform effect of it, and therefore essentially

necessary to complete the proof that the change has taken place.

"Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." Religion is a divine life, a vital principle in the soul, of heavenly origin; and, therefore, it must have external manifestations, an outgrowth of holy activities. The seed being planted, the fruit will surely and speedily appear. What saith the Scripture? "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God," 1 John iii. 9. Paul, in 1 Cor. vi. 11, speaks of Christians, though polluted and unholy before, yet in their regeneration, as washed and sanctified by the Spirit of God. As, from the vital energy in the seed, the stem, leaves, buds, blossoms, and ripened fruit of the plant are evolved, so, from the living principle of grace in the heart, are developed in the life all the rich and clustering fruits of the Spirit—all those gracious activities which constitute holy living. This alteration in the life will be marked and conspicuous, when the openly profane and irreligious are new-born. But it is not confined to persons of that description. "A change will even take place," says Dr. Dick, "in the most moral unconverted man, as soon as he is born from above. There are, perhaps, no gross sins, from which he needs to be purified; but he will become more spiritual in his conversation, more attentive to

religious and relative duties, less eager in pursuit of the world, more scrupulous in the selection of his company, and more cautious in avoiding the occasions of sin and appearances of evil. The eye of an attentive and practised spectator will perceive, notwithstanding his former fair show, that even he is become a new man. * * * * The praise of man is no longer the motive which stimulates his activity; another, of a purer and more exalted kind, has assumed its place—a desire for the approbation of his Maker. A reference to God in all his thoughts and actions, a regard to his authority, a love compounded of esteem, gratitude, and desire of his favour and presence, are the principles by which he is governed. There is an elevation of sentiment and affection above the standard of nature, however carefully improved. He is still in the world, but he is no longer of it; and, although he attends to its affairs, and feels joy and sorrow from its changes, he gives the decided and habitual preference to nobler objects; and, like the ancient sojourners in Canaan, whose faith we are exhorted to follow, he declares plainly that he is seeking a better country, even an heavenly."

CHAPTER VIII.

CONCLUSION.

I HAVE endeavoured, in the preceding pages, to set forth the Scriptural doctrine of the new birth,—the nature, instantaneousness, necessity, author, instrument, and fruits of regeneration, as these things are taught in the word of God.

Regeneration,—it has been seen in this exhibition of it,—is a great and glorious change, in which the soul is convinced of sin, the understanding enlightened in the knowledge of God, the will renewed, the affections regulated, the body sanctified, and all the powers of the man directed to new and nobler objects. This wonderful change is instantaneously wrought, there being no delay in the transition from death to life, no intermediate state between the state of nature and the state of grace, between condemnation in sin and justification in the righteousness of Christ, between a righteous exposure to hell and a gracious title to heaven. The necessity for this change arises from the fact that all men are spiritually dead, and without tastes, or aptitudes, or even

powers, for spiritual employments and pleasures; and is impressively set forth and taught in Holy Scripture. God the Holy Ghost is the sole author of this change, which he effects by the direct exertion of his almighty power; using, however, to this end, the truth revealed in the Bible, as the external means. Of all which the resulting consequence and the indubitable evidence is a complete revolution in the spiritual tastes and emotions, and a radical, pervading, and permanent reformation of the life; and this, however amiable the temper, however moral the deportment, however upright and useful, in a merely worldly point of view, the life may have previously been.

Are we asked as to the essence of this new life, and the manner of its infusion into the soul? We candidly own our inability to explain, or even to conceive what it is, or how it is. But we avow an equal incompetency to conceive or explain what the essence or the origin of that life is, which pervades, moves, and animates this mortal body. We know the fact of our natural life, because we see and feel its effects in the phenomena of sensation, thought, volition, and action. In the same manner, and with the same certainty, do we know the fact of our new spiritual life. We reason, judge, desire, hope, believe, repent, and act, as we never did before. Our thoughts are new; our aims are new; our motives are new; our emotions are new; our life is new. In these actings of the new, spiritual,

and divine life, we have abundant evidence of its existence.

The Bible speaks of spiritual life just as it speaks of natural life, treating the one as a reality equally with the other. A beautiful incident is related by Dr. Brownlee, in his "Christian Youth's Book," showing how vigorous the former sometimes is amid the decay and wreck of the latter, even when reason, judgment, and memory have deserted the throne. An aged servant of God had sunk to an extreme mental imbecility. The scenes of his youth, which are ever the last to let go their hold upon the memory, had faded from his mind. Friends, children, even the dear partner of his life had, all alike, become strangers to him. Of his wife he declared, that he did not remember to have seen her. A friend, standing by the bedside of the dying saint, said to him, "Do you know who the Lord Jesus Christ is?" Instantly his mind rallied, and he replied, "O yes, I know the Lord Jesus Christ; he has been my very dear Saviour these fifty years." Well does the learned and pious doctor, in commenting on this incident, observe, that "spiritual life is a positive reality in the very essence of the soul, as much as any other inseparable or known quality or attribute of it."

The sum is: there are two states, and every child of Adam is in the one or the other of them. These are the carnal and the spiritual; the state of nature and the state of grace. These two states

are directly contrary to each other. They can no more coalesce than Christ and Belial. There is no one point, where they meet and harmonize. It is true that they are both predicable of human beings; but there the analogy stops. The one is a state of darkness; the other, of light. The one is a state of enmity to God; the other, of love to him. The one is a state of death; the other, of life. When we are in one of these states, our chief end is to serve ourselves; when in the other, to glorify God. In one of them, the soul rests in the creature as its chief good; in the other, it rests in God as its portion and its happiness. When in the one state, a man's ways "take hold on death;" when in the other, "his path is like the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day."

Reader, in which of these states are you—the regenerate or the unregenerate? In one or the other you must be, for there is not a third. How important to bring the matter to a trial! What madness to live in an uncertainty on such a question! If regenerate, what a comfort to know it! If unregenerate, there is no time for delay in seeking converting grace. Repent or perish, is the divine sentence. The new birth or perdition is the alternative. Morality will not save you. Outward reformation will not save you. Baptism, church membership, external ordinances will not save you. It is of no avail to cry, "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are we." This was the

claim, this the boast, this the reliance of the Pharisees of old, against whom the heaviest woes of damnation were denounced by the lips of the gentle, the loving, the gracious Saviour. If you are not the subjects of renewing grace, you are yet in your sins, and, dying in that condition, you must "go away into everlasting punishment."

How stands the case, then, with you, reader? Are you conscious of a spiritual renovation? Have the illuminations of the Spirit pervaded your understanding, his divine energy subdued your will, his gentle breathings softened your heart? Do you feel the actings of the new life within you? Is that life quickened by the Spirit into active obedience and holy delight in God? Are you sensible of a new interest and pleasure in duty? Do you find your proper element in the service of God? Is Christ formed within you? Are his mind, his heart, and his life reproduced in yours? Does he live and walk in you? Have you crucified the flesh, with its affections and lusts? Does your heart, pierced with a sense of sin, like the rock smitten by the rod of God, send forth the waters of penitential grief? Is grace a living fountain within you of holy desires, holy aspirations, holy resolves, holy aims, and holy actions? Has a purer and nobler motive than human applause and worldly riches, even a desire of the divine approbation and the heavenly inheritance, taken possession of your soul? Are love to the Divine Being and regard

to the Divine authority the spring and the rule of your conduct? Though in the world, are you no longer of the world? Though mingling in its affairs and sensitive to its vicissitudes, do you, like patriarchs and prophets, declare plainly that you are seeking a heavenly country? If so, happy are you! Seek a complete consecration, an entire sanctification. Aim at an abundant entrance and a lustrous crown.

But if otherwise, if still unregenerate, suffer the word of solemn warning and affectionate entreaty. Your state is bad, but it is not hopeless. Christ is able, Christ is willing, to save to the uttermost. There is no guilt too great for him to cancel; no stain of sin too deep for him to wash out; no chain of Satan too strong for him to break asunder. Fly to his cross for refuge; seek from him the new heart. Infinite obligations press you to this; infinite compassion weeps over your insensibility; infinite mercy stoops to redeem you; infinite love wooes your return. Let fall at length the weapons of your rebellion. All that is great, all that is good, all that is pure, all that is lovely, implore you to seek the regenerating and saving grace of God in Christ.

Unconverted reader, receive the parting word which I address to you in all tenderness and fidelity, and may God, by his Spirit, impress it with saving power on your heart. It is this: Take with you to your home, to your business, to your closet, to

your most secret thoughts and self-communings, the words of our Saviour to Nicodemus, so solemn in their import, so startling by their energy, so tremendous and far-reaching in the destiny to which they point,—"EXCEPT A MAN BE BORN AGAIN, HE CANNOT SEE THE KINGDOM OF GOD!"

ALPHABETICAL INDEX OF SUBJECTS.

(The figures refer to the pages.)

ACTIVITY AND PASSIVITY.—In what sense both may be predicated of the soul in regeneration, 76—Many apparently contradictory passages reconciled by this view, 77.

AFFECTIONS.—Changed as to their direction and objects in regeneration, 28.

AUTHOR OF REGENERATION.—God the Holy Spirit, 58. Citation from Shorter Catechism to this effect, 58—This doctrine indicated by the names given to the Spirit, 58—The Scriptures abundantly attest it, 59—Need of almighty Power in the work of regeneration proved from the nature of the change, 60—From the change being called a creation, 61—From the thing to be changed, 63—From the difficulty of the work, 64—From the varying success of the gospel, 66—From the explicit declarations of the Bible, 69—God claims regeneration as his work, 70—The great Teacher's testimony, 72—Paul's testimony, 72—Jeremiah's testimony, 73—Ezekiel's testimony, 73—Effect of the Spirit's work, 74—He operates, not upon a mere lump of clay, but upon a rational and moral being, 74—Mode of the Spirit's work, a mystery, 78—A reality, 79—Endlessly varied, 80.

BAPTISM.—Erroneously identified with regeneration, 9.

BODY, THE.—Sanctified in regeneration, 30—This point much insisted on by the sacred writers, 31.

CICERO.—His use of the term regeneration, 8.

CONVERSION.—Wherein it differs from regeneration, 78.

CONVICTION OF SIN.—An essential prerequisite to regeneration, 11—Wrought by the Holy Spirit, 11—Instrument of the divine law, 11—Not uniform in all, 12—Not to be viewed as a warrant for, or a condition of welcome in, coming to

Christ, 13—This the error of the Remonstrants of Holland, 14—Nevertheless it is in its own nature essential, since none ever come to Christ without feeling their need of him, 14.

Errors.—Touching the nature of regeneration, 9.

Freedom.—Nature of the will's, 22.

Evidences of Regeneration.—See Fruits of Regeneration.

Fruits of Regeneration.—New apprehensions of God, 98—New views of Christ, 99—A new relish of ordinances, 100—New views of sin, 100—New thoughts and exercises in respect to holiness, 101—New views of truth, 101—New judgments concerning self, 102—New feelings toward Christians, 103—New emotions toward sinners, 103—A new estimate of of the world, 104—A new estimate of time, 104—New judgments of eternity, 105—A new life, 106.

Gospel, The.—Its office in regeneration, 86.

Holy Spirit.—See Author of Regeneration.

Illumination, Spiritual.—An element in regeneration, 15—The first effect of renewing grace, 15—Why necessary, 15—Office of the Spirit to impart light, 16—Nature and scope of spiritual illumination, 18—Does not reveal new truth, 20.

Instantaneousness of Regeneration.—Regeneration, of necessity, instantaneous, 33—Proved by instances from Scripture, 34—From its being termed a calling, 36—From its being compared to a creation and a resurrection, 37—From a classification of men common in the Bible, 38.

Instrument of Regeneration.—This is the word of God, 83—The doctrine abundantly taught in the Bible, 83—The Saviour's testimony, 83—Paul's, 84—Peter's, 85—James's, 85—David's, 86—This doctrine confirmed by the history of God's grace, 87—Divine word comprised in two departments, the law and the gospel, 88—The office of each, 88—The word not the efficient cause of regeneration, 89.

Israelites.—Their use of the word regeneration, 8.

Josephus.—His use of the term regeneration, 8.

Law, the Divine.—Its office in regeneration, 11, 88.

Life, Spiritual.—Its essence inexplicable, 110—Its reality undoubted, 111.

Morality.—Not regeneration, 9.

Necessity of Regeneration.—This necessity extends to all men, 46—Proved from the condition of human nature, 48—From the fact that heaven itself would afford no enjoy-

ment without it, 51—From the holiness of God, 51—From the mission and work of Christ, 52—From many plain Scripture testimonies, 53—The Bible insists upon this necessity, 55—A strange doctrine to worldlings and philosophers, 56.

New Birth.—See Regeneration.

Orthodoxy.—Erroneously regarded as regeneration, 9.

Passivity and Activity.—See Activity and Passivity.

Profession, Visible.—Not regeneration, 9.

Reformation.—Wrongly identified with regeneration, 9.

Regeneration.—Definition of, 7—Names given to it in the Bible, 7—Primary meaning of, 8—Errors concerning, 9—Scriptural idea of, 10—Implies conviction of sin, 11—Spiritual illumination, 15—Renewal of the will, 22—Renovation of the heart, 28—Sanctification of the body, 30—Is instantaneous, 33—Time of, not necessary to be known, 39—Indispensable necessity of, 46—Author of, 58—Distinguished from conversion, 78—Instrument of, 83—Means of, 91—Fruits and evidences of, 97—Recapitulation of doctrine concerning, 109.

Roman Law.—Denominates the manumission of a slave regeneration, 8.

Soul, The Human.—In what sense passive, and in what active, in regeneration, 76.

Unconverted Men.—Bound to use the means of regeneration, 93—Means useful, 93—Fatal to trust in means, 94—The reader warned against this danger, and exhorted to fly to Christ, 95.

Will, the Human.—Renewal of, in regeneration, 22—Nature and extent of its freedom, 23—Explanations concerning, 24—Renovation of the will indispensable, 25—Accompanies spiritual illumination, 25—No violence done to the will in regeneration, 26—The will ever free, 27—Consciousness proves this, 27—Manner of the Spirit's work in renewing the will a deep mystery, 28.

Word of God.—See Instrument of Regeneration.

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